

# **ANOTHER FRATERNAL ENDEAVOR**

**CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
LIBRARY  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS**

*Issued By*

**THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD**  
**210 N. BROADWAY      •      SAINT LOUIS 2, MISSOURI**



# *Another Fraternal Endeavor*

The nine essays in this booklet were presented and discussed by the representatives of the Missouri Synod with representatives of the Wisconsin Synod in two meetings held in January and May. These meetings were Another Fraternal Endeavor to remove the misunderstandings that have arisen between the two synods. These essays are now being sent to all pastors of the Synodical Conference for their information. May this booklet help to remove obstacles and to smooth the way for a continued walking together in peace and harmony in our Synodical Conference.

"Behold, how good and how  
pleasant it is for brethren to  
dwell together in unity."

*Psalm 133:1*

# CONTENTS

An Analysis and Evaluation of Certain Charges Made Against the Common Confession.....	5
Religious Unionism.....	30
Prayer Fellowship or Joint Prayer.....	39
The Military Chaplaincy.....	51
Cooperation in Externals, Unionistic (?) Religious Programs and Church Federations.....	62
Continued Negotiations With the ALC.....	76
Negotiations With Deistic Organizations.....	80
Scoutism.....	83
Separatism.....	88

# AN ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF CERTAIN CHARGES MADE AGAINST THE COMMON CONFESSION

In December of 1953 the Lord God called to Life the soul of the Reverend William Roepke, Pastor emeritus of the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Marquette, Michigan. Pastor Roepke was well-known to our brethren in the Wisconsin Synod, since for many years he served one of its Districts and later the General Synod as Chairman of the Mission Board. He is related to the writer by marriage, and often spoke to him about the threatened break in relations between the Wisconsin Synod and the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. It was constantly upon his heart and deeply concerned him. His earnest prayer was that God in His mercy would prevent it. "It shouldn't be," he said, "and it need not be."

Now that God has taken him from the Church militant to the Church triumphant we pray earnestly that our words may prove no obstacle to the fulfillment of his prayer. And to that end we humbly ask God for the divine help of His Holy Spirit. We realize, of course, that the issues before us are not mere matters of emotion and feeling, but of God's Will and Word, and that what we resolve upon here must conform thereto. To assist in arriving at such a God-pleasing goal the writer has prepared this essay.

The purpose of this presentation is to look once more, as objectively as we can, at the Common Confession; and to analyze and evaluate the various charges that have been leveled against it, especially those contained in the Wisconsin Synod Proceedings of 1951 (Document No. 4, pp. 128-135.)

Before beginning, however, let us first remove some of the many misunderstandings which have arisen in connection with the Common Confession. We notice by the charges of the Wisconsin Synod against the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, as contained in the resolutions of the Milwaukee Convention held in October of 1953, that the Wisconsin Synod has proceeded on the assumption that in our Houston Convention (1953) the Common Confession had been reaffirmed. This is obviously an error, for at the Houston Convention the Common Confession was neither rescinded nor reaffirmed. As one of the members of the Floor Committee

on Doctrinal and Inter-synodical Matters the writer can assure the brethren of the Wisconsin Synod that such a resolution was never even contemplated. Our reasons were obvious. We had before us the document known as Common Confession No. II which was to be received as a supplement to Common Confession No. I, and which we hoped to make into one document with it. We felt, therefore, that until all interested parties, including our sister synods, had had the opportunity to evaluate this document, it would be premature to take any action of any kind on Part I of the Common Confession, especially since we had the hope that the two documents made into one, might yet prove satisfactory to our brethren in the Wisconsin Synod and to all concerned. We therefore proposed, and the Convention adopted the following resolution: (Houston Proceedings, 1953, p. 532)

"Whereas Part II of the Common Confession supplements and expands Part I; and

"Whereas future study of Part II of the Common Confession may clarify possible misunderstandings encountered in Part I; therefore be it

"Resolved, That this Convention take no action on overtures pertaining to Part I of the Common Confession; and be it further

"Resolved, That we urge all pastors, teachers, and laymen to study privately, in conference, and in adult Bible classes the Scriptures as referred to in the Common Confession in its present form (namely, Parts I and II as a unit — See Resolution No. 7, p. 528; Resolution No. 19, p. 538; and Overture to the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, p. 540, Houston Proceedings, 1951,) asking the Holy Ghost for our Savior's sake to enlighten us on these teachings through His gracious Word, encouraging the membership to report their Scriptural findings to our Synod's Unity Committee in sufficient time to have them included in their written report to the next convention." (Underscoring, the writer's.)

Surely this is not a resolution of reaffirmation.

The claim is now being made that, whereas we did not reaffirm the Common Confession formally, we did so in effect. This claim is based on statements made from the floor of our convention by the chairman of our Doctrinal Unity Committee and by Dr. Behnken as they replied to questions from the Wisconsin Synod representatives. However, to give these replies the force or effect of reaffirmation is contrary to the resolution of the convention, that we "take no action." And no one in our official circles so interprets them.

Another point concerning which there is definite and basic misunderstanding is the interpretation to be placed on our acceptance of the Common Confession in 1950. In 1951 our Doctrinal Committee said that this action of our Synod is to be understood as "A settlement of those doctrinal controversies that were before the Church up to the time of the Common Confession" (Minutes, Committee on Doctrinal Unity, April 10, 1951.). This interpretation, however, must not be pressed to mean

more than it can mean. It cannot mean that the settlement was absolute and final. The additional resolutions of 1950 allowing for possible "clarification" and supplementation forbid that. The 1953 resolution urging the study of the Common Confession in its present form (Res. 9, p. 533 Proceedings) forbids that. The Constitution of the Synodical Conference which prevents unilateral action by one of its Synods forbids that. The fact that the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has not entered into fellowship and is not now in fellowship with the American Lutheran Church — forbids that.

Our adoption of the Common Confession for the present can, therefore, only be interpreted as a "settlement in good faith;" for only the unfolding of history, i.e. the carrying out of this agreement with its provisions can show how final and conclusive this "settlement" really was. This is how the official interpretation of our Doctrinal Unity Committee must be understood. And this is what our Doctrinal Floor Committee also told the representatives of the Wisconsin Synod when they were with us in Houston. Therefore, to interpret our action beyond this is to misinterpret it. And this is what, we fear, is being done.

In this connection permit us to call attention to another case of misunderstanding. It has been said that by our resolutions at Houston we rebuffed the Honorable Wisconsin Synod at every turn, by every action we took with respect to her overture. We are aware that such reports have been circulated. But these reports are not factual. Let us take, for instance, our action with respect to "the six questions" which had been addressed to our Synod in 1950, and which had been answered by our Presidium. In its Overture (No. 610 in our Proceedings, 1953) the Wisconsin Synod asked us to reconsider this answer of our Presidium. Our action is recorded on page 553 of the Houston Proceedings and reads in full as follows:

## **RESOLUTION NO. 18**

- "1. In 1949 the Wisconsin Synod addressed a letter to our Synod in which it asked for an answer to certain questions on matters of doctrine and practice (Missouri Synod Proceedings, 1950, pp. 666. 667.)
- "2. Upon instruction of the 1950 convention the Presidium of our Synod answered the questions put to our Synod in the letter of the Wisconsin Synod. (Missouri Proceedings 1950, p. 669, Resolution 13.)
- "3. At its convention in 1951 the Wisconsin Synod declared the answers of our Presidium to be unsatisfactory. (Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1951, p. 148.)
- "4. In 1952 the Wisconsin Synod appealed this matter to the Synodical Conference, whereupon the Synodical Conference passed a resolution urging 'the Missouri Synod to take the steps necessary to bring about

a God-pleasing disposition' of these matters. (Proceedings of the Synodical Conference, 1952, p. 157, II; p. 160.)

"5. The Wisconsin Synod now appeals to this convention to 'reconsider the reply' of our Praesidium. (Memorial 610, 3. Reports and Memorials, 1953.)

"6. Your Committee has studied

- a) the questions addressed to our Synod;
- b) the reply of our Praesidium to these questions;
- c) the action of the Wisconsin Synod at its 1951 convention; and
- d) the action of the Synodical Conference on the appeal of the Wisconsin Synod (cf. Proceedings, Synodical Conference, 1952, pages 157-160.)

"Your Committee believes that the letter of the Praesidium correctly states the *Scriptural principles* in the matters concerned; however,

"Whereas, Not only matters of doctrine, but also the application of Scriptural principles to exceptional cases are involved in Memorial 610, 3; and

Whereas, Such cases cannot be adequately considered on the floor of the Convention; therefore be it

"Resolved, That this Convention asks the Praesidium to continue to 'take the steps necessary to bring about a God-pleasing disposition of the matters involved in this Memorial; and that the Wisconsin Synod be informed of this action of the Convention."

Now what did we really do in this resolution? We asked our Praesidium to carry out the decision of the Synodical Conference to which the Wisconsin Synod had appealed, namely, "to take steps necessary to bring about a God-pleasing disposition of these matters." We felt that this ought to be sufficient for the time being, since "a God-pleasing disposition" would certainly include any correction of error and any removal of offense. Since our Praesidium was involved in these "charges," we also believed that they could easily arrange to refer this matter to some special committee, or to Synod's Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Practice for counsel and advice. And because we had good reason to believe that our Praesidium had begun to take the steps asked of them in the Synodical Conference resolution of 1952, we felt that the convention should do no more than to encourage them to "continue" what they had already begun. Thus our resolution seemed to us to be both just and brotherly to all concerned, and certainly not "a rebuff" to our sister Synod.

We may add, on one of the last evenings of our Houston Convention, a number of us from the Doctrinal Floor Committee had an informal meeting with the representatives of the Wisconsin Synod for the purpose of mutually evaluating our resolutions



lest there be any misunderstanding with regard to their meaning. At this meeting the writer personally asked the Wisconsin Synod representatives how they felt about the above-named resolution in response to their Synod's overture. We asked whether the Wisconsin Synod, with the situation exactly reversed could have done any different than we had done. To this question the Wisconsin representatives said, "No, we realize that you did the only thing you could have done under the circumstances." We were very happy over this reply and said so. Nothing further was said on this point. It was, therefore, quite a surprise to us when this particular resolution was referred to in the Milwaukee convention of the Wisconsin Synod as a "rebuff" to that honorable Body. If that is the impression our action gave, we are surely sorry, but it certainly was not meant to be that. We make mention of this at this juncture because the historical resume of the Wisconsin Synod Delegation presented to this meeting, page 8, makes special reference to this resolution while discussing one of our decisions pertaining to future action with respect to the Common Confession; and because we believe that the full background of this resolution ought to be known, lest a false light be thrown upon any of our actions pertaining to the Common Confession.

With these points out of the way let us now proceed prayerfully to a careful analysis of the Wisconsin Synod "Review of the Common Confession," marked Document No. 4 on pages 128-135 of the 1951 Book of Proceedings (Wis. Synod.). It is vital that we do so, for the Wisconsin Synod resolutions which declared the Common Confession inadequate, and asked for its repudiation, are based upon it. We note also that the essay presented by District President Barthels of the Wisconsin Synod takes its stand upon it.

## ART. VI—JUSTIFICATION

Let us turn to p. 129 of the 1951 Wisconsin Synod Proceedings. Here we read under Justification, Art. VI: "Any clear and correct presentation of this article requires not merely the inclusion of the term 'objective justification,' but a clear statement that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God has already declared every sinner righteous in His sight. For the non-imputation of the trespasses of the world (2 Cor. 5, 19) is to be identified with the establishing of a public verdict of acquittal (dikaiōi katastathesontai — Ro. 5, 19) upon those whose justification was revealed and proclaimed by the Resurrection of Christ (Ro. 4, 25.)."

"This truth is impaired when the article states that forgiveness 'has been secured and provided for all men.' For this still leaves room for the thought that the justification of the sinner is not complete until the missing factor of personal (subjective) faith is supplied, a thought which is even suggested in the Article by its description of justification as taking place on the basis of 'Christ's righteousness which He imputes to the sinner through the Gospel and which the sinner accepts by faith.'"

"Since this formulation admits of false answers to the question concerning the function of faith in justification, the article must be rejected."

The Wisconsin Synod contends, therefore, that the Common Confession impairs the doctrine of "Objective justification." Is this charge warranted? We think not. We believe that the Common Confession says precisely what the Scriptures and our Confessional Writings say on this doctrine.

To illustrate: The Common Confession says, "By His redemptive work Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world; hence forgiveness of sin has been secured and provided for all men. (This is often spoken of as Objective Justification.). Hence no sinner need to be eternally lost on account of his sins." Does this agree with the words of the Brief Statement, "that God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ"? A closer study of the phrase, "forgiveness of sins" will give the answer. This phrase, "the forgiveness of sins" is constantly used in Scripture, in our Lutheran literature and in the Confessional Writings as an exact synonym for justification and reconciliation. In Dogmatik II, p. 412, Dr. F. Pieper says, "Die Suende nicht zurechnen" ist nach dem Sprachgebrauch der Schrift (Roemer 4, 6-8) so viel als 'die Suende vergeben,' 'die Suender rechtfertigen,' (that is, "not imputing sins" is according to Scriptural usage (Romans 4, 6-8) the same as "forgiving sins," "declaring sinners righteous"). In Vol. II, of Dogmatics, p. 537, Dr. F. Pieper says, "Paul uses the term 'justify' and the terms 'iniquities are forgiven' and 'sins are covered' synonymously." The Apology says, "To attain the remission of sins is to be justified" (Trigl. 143, Art. IV (II), 76.) The Formula of Concord says, "The word 'justify' means in this article 'to absolve, to declare free from sins' (Trigl. 793, Epit. II, 7.). (See also Trigl. 145, 84; 147, 87; 149, 97; 141, 72; 919, 9; 921, 17.).

The phrase "forgiveness of sins" is never used in the Lutheran Church to describe anything but a verdict, a decision made in God's heart, (cf. Dogmatics II, p. 397 — Pieper), or a promise declared to man (Trigl. 145, 84), or the act of declaring sinners righteous (F. Pieper, Dogm. II, p. 525 — bottom of page.). Hence, to say as the Common Confession does, that "forgiveness of sins has been secured and provided for all men" is exactly the same as saying, "A verdict of the non-imputation of their sins has been secured . . . for all men," or "a decision of acquittal from their sin" or "A declaration whereby the ungodly have been declared godly" has been secured and provided for all men.

And because the Common Confession bases this "forgiveness of sins" or "this verdict whereby the sinner has been declared righteous in God's sight" on Christ's redemptive work, which has been completed once for all in His death and resurrection (See Common Confession, Art. III, Redemption "God by raising . . . complete",) it follows that this verdict of the "non-imputation of sins" is a finished product, 'ein fertiges Gut' (Wis. Synod. Proc. 1951, p. 128, par. 2.). And this thought is emphasized when the Common Confession adds, "God offers this propitiation and recon-

ciliation," (i.e. this 'finished product,' 'this verdict of acquittal') freely to all men through the means of grace; for the word 'freely' implies that nothing can be added, that it is being offered without any condition whatsoever.

This interpretation of the Common Confession is supported by an additional statement of the same truth under the Article of Redemption (III), where we read, "God, by raising Christ from the dead, proclaimed to the world that He has accepted the atonement for man's sin as completed," that is, by an act which has taken place once for all in the history of this world, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has once for all proclaimed to the world this verdict, "that He has accepted the atonement (i.e. the reconciliation, of the justification, or the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner — See Apol. Trigl. 143, 81.) as completed." What is this but the proclamation to the world of a finished product ("ein fertiges Gut"), a completed verdict concerning all sinners! And that is exactly what the Synodical Conference has always confessed under the theological term of "objective justification."

And since this "atonement," or "propitiation," or "reconciliation," or "justification," or "verdict of acquittal" is being offered to all men 'freely,' it follows that nothing we can do, not even the act of faith can add anything to it (Apol. Trigl. p. 137, 55); that it is in truth a finished product, a verdict completed once for all.

To summarize: The Common Confession teaches that there has been secured and provided for all men "forgiveness of sins," i.e., a verdict whereby they have been declared righteous in God's sight. And the Brief Statement says, "God has already declared the whole world righteous in His sight." Hence, while the terminology is different, both teach exactly the same doctrine of objective justification, except that the Common Confession uses the terminology more common in the Confessional writings, namely, "forgiveness of sins."

The additional statement in Common Confession Part II, Art. 3 is, therefore, merely a reaffirmation of what already has been confessed. It reads, "No one is excluded from the forgiveness spoken by God to the world in the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ." (We remind the reader, that 'forgiveness' must again be understood as a synonym of "The verdict by which the sinner has been declared righteous"). Surely, this should satisfy the most exacting student of this article and convince him that the heritage of our faith is here clearly confessed and adequately preserved.

However, according to Scriptures and our Confessions, the sinner must also be justified personally, i.e., be declared righteous individually. This is done, when through the Gospel Christ's righteousness, or Christ's propitiation, or Christ's forgiveness of sins, or God's verdict of acquittal from sin, is imputed to the sinner, and when he accepts it by faith. This is called "subjective justification" and it is here that faith functions in its purely receptive capacity. It makes no difference whether we say, as does the Common Confession, "Christ's righteousness is through

the Gospel imputed to the sinner," or whether we say, "God's verdict of acquittal," or "Christ's merit," or "the forgiveness of sins" are through the Gospel imputed to the sinner, since these terms are used interchangeably and synonymously in Holy Scripture, in the Confessional writings, and in this article of the Common Confession.

Quenstedt (Vol. II, p. 753) says in this connection, "The imputation of Christ's righteousness is essentially nothing else than the remission of sins, and the remission of sins is nothing else than the imputation of Christ's righteousness, so that either word separately taken expresses the whole nature of justification." And Dr. F. Pieper also says on this point, "Scripture and the Confessions use the terms 'Christ's righteousness,' 'Christ's obedience,' 'Christ's suffering,' 'Christ's merit,' 'forgiveness,' 'justification,' etc. as synonyms." (Dogmatics II, p. 539). (See esp. also Dr. F. Pieper, Dogmatics II, p. 537, par. 6, which treats this point specifically and extensively. See also Triglotta, p. 207, 185. 187. 189.; p. 347, 19.; p. 793, 2. 3.; p. 919, 9. 10.; p. 921, 16. 17.; p. 923, 23. 24. 25.; 2 Cor. 5, 19-21.; Ro. 4, 5-8).

We hold, therefore, that in its presentation of justification, the Common Confession places faith where it belongs: not in objective justification but in subjective justification, where its function is to receive Christ's righteousness, or the forgiveness of sins. The Common Confession therefore does not deserve to be condemned as admitting of "false answers to the question concerning the function of faith in justification."

## VII CONVERSION

Now let us proceed to Article VII which deals with the doctrine of Conversion. On this point the Wisconsin Synod says (Proceedings, 1951, p. 129): "In view of past controversies on this subject a clear and correct presentation of the doctrine of Conversion must include a rejection of the untenable distinction between a natural and a wilful resistance of man, as well as of any attempt at explaining the mystery 'cur alii prae aliis?' (Cf. Brief Statement, Art. 12-14.).

"We note that the Common Confession not only fails to include such a specific rejection, but that its positive wording does not exclude the thought of man's preparing himself for conversion by refraining from such wilful resistance.

"We also note the lack of any definite reference to the total spiritual disability of natural man as described in the classic passages (Eph. 2, 1-3; Ro. 8, 7.; 1 Cor. 2, 14.), or of a clear statement on this subject (Cf. Brief Statement, Art. 11.). In view of the other deficiency mentioned above this is a particularly unfortunate omission.

"Since the article thus leaves room for the error that man's conversion is at least in part conditioned upon his own attitude or preparation, and since this is precisely the issue that was in controversy between the synods of the American

Lutheran Church and the Synodical Conference, it must, as a confession be rejected. The purely receptive function of faith has not been maintained."

So far the Wisconsin Synod. Now let us examine these charges one by one:

1. The first charge made is this, that the Common Confession "fails to include a specific rejection" of "the untenable distinction between a natural and wilful resistance of man, as well as of any other attempt at explaining the mystery, 'Cur alii prae aliis'."

Answer: It is true that the Common Confession does not specifically name the various attempts that have been made to explain the mystery referred to; however, with its exclusive particles the Common Confession so completely and so categorically rejects every attempt of this kind, that all are most decisively excluded, including the use of a distinction between natural and wilful resistance for the purpose referred to above. The Common Confession does this when it says, "This change of heart with respect to sin (contritio passiva, or contritio legalis) and this reliance upon Christ for salvation from sin is the work of God the Holy Spirit, without any cooperation whatsoever from sinful man. 'No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.' 1 Cor. 12, 3b." (Cf. Acts 5, 31; 26, 18; Eph. 2, 1-9; Je. 31, 18-19; Ezek. 11, 19-20.)

Here we have what are called "the exclusive particles" (particulae exclusivae) and of the strongest type in trebled form. They can hardly be more decisively and categorically exclusive. How can anyone in the face of them say that the Common Confession leaves room for some kind of cooperation towards conversion, when the words assure us that conversion is the work of the Holy Ghost, "without... cooperation... from sinful man"; "without any cooperation," "without any cooperation whatsoever...!"

2. The second charge is this, that there is a "particularly unfortunate omission" of any definite reference to the total spiritual disability of natural man as described in the classic passages (Eph. 2, 1-3; Ro. 8, 7; 1 Cor. 2, 14,) or that "a clear statement on this subject" is missing.

Answer: We refer the reader to Art. II of the Common Confession, where we read, "Man disobeyed God and thereby became a sinner, alienating himself from God, and bringing death upon himself and all his posterity... Therefore all men are born in this world with original sin; and being unable to observe God's divine commands, they wilfully continue to transgress God's holy law in thoughts, words and deeds. Man as a sinner has delivered himself into the bondage of sin and of the devil, from which man cannot free himself by his own powers. From this desperate condition and tyranny only God can set man free." This last section is Luther's way of describing man in his sinful state (See "De Servo arbitrio".) Surely this is strong and clear language. It describes man as indifferent and inimical ("alienated") to

God; as dead in sin, as totally unable to free himself from the desperate bondage of sin and Satan, since "only God can set him free."

We hold, therefore, that the Common Confession Part I, by its exclusive particles under Article VI ("Without any cooperation whatsoever"); and by its clear statements of the total inability of man to free himself from his desperate condition of alienation, death, and bondage to Satan and sin, categorically excludes every teaching whereby "man's conversion is at least in part conditioned on his own attitude or preparation." We hold also, that the Common Confession completely safeguards the purely receptive function of faith in conversion.

However, despite this the formulators of the Common Confession have declared themselves ready to make these additional statements in Part II, Art. i, (1) of the Common Confession, "It (the Church) confronts a mankind, which, without the gracious working of the Holy Spirit, is totally corrupt in trespasses and sins, is completely blinded to the will of God, and wilfully resists every endeavor of God to save it from destruction." Surely more need not be said to show 'good faith' or to clarify this section!

## ARTICLE IV ELECTION

In its review of this article of the Common Confession the Wisconsin Synod states the following:

"Since the Scriptural doctrine of Election is meant to comfort the believer with the assurance that his faith is secured unto him by God's eternal decree (Mt. 24, 24; Eph. 1, 3-5; 2 Tim. 2, 19; 2 Th. 2, 13), a correct presentation of this important doctrine must include

- "a) a clear and unmistakable statement that this election is an election unto faith (Acts 13, 48; Eph. 1, 5; 2 Thess. 2, 13);
- "b) the positive assurance that this election is a cause of our salvation and what pertains thereto (Trigl. 1065, #8; Ro. 8, 28-30; Jn. 10, 27-29; cf. Jn. 6, 65);
- "c) definite recognition of the certainty of this election ('which cannot fail or be overthrown,' — Trigl. 1097 #45. Cf. also Mt. 24, 24; Jn. 10, 27-29; Ro. 8, 28-30, 38f.).

"These vital and indispensable statements are, however, not to be found in this article of the Common Confession. This article must therefore be rejected because it fails to say what is required in a Scriptural presentation of the doctrine of Election. Acts 20, 27; Deut. 4, 2.

"The article also falls short of confessional clarity by failing to state that God's eternal decree of election did not merely set up a description of those who

will be saved, but meant that He has chosen 'each and every person,' a specific number, unto faith and eternal life. (Personenwahl — Form. Conc. S.D.XI, #23; Brief Statement, Art. 39).

"Since the Common Confession in this article of predestination — by which doctrine the Scriptures take the matter of our faith and of our salvation entirely out of our hands and places it completely into the hands of our loving God and Father — neglected to assign clearly and unmistakably to faith its place in God's act of election, this confession thereby failed in the supreme test concerning the solia gratia, and has opened the gates wide for synergistic error." So far the Wisconsin Synod.

We call attention to the three points made against the Common Confession:

1. That certain "vital and indispensable statements (marked a) b) and c)) are not to be found in this article of the Common Confession;"
2. That this article "falls short of confessional clarity, because it fails to state that God has chosen 'each and every person,' a specific number unto faith and eternal life;" and
3. That the Common Confession in this article, "neglected to assign clearly and unmistakably to faith its place in God's election."

To Point 1 we reply as follows: While the doctrinal content alluded to in these statements is necessary, their form is somewhat unsatisfactory. In this connection one must be careful not to insist on a presentation that lends itself to the Calvinistic interpretation of an election 'nude,' i.e., an election apart from Christ, apart from the 'ordo salutis.' For, as Dr. F. Pieper points out in his Dogmatics III, p. 476, "God did not — and this bears constant repetition — (God did not) blindly reach into the mass of mankind with His almighty Hand and with His bare omnipotence seize a number of men as His elect, but He seized (airesthai, 'choose') His elect, as is immediately added, (2 Thess. 2, 1e) 'through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth' (en hagio pneumatos kai pistei aletheias) so that in this choosing was included the work of the Holy Ghost approaching the chosen with the Gospel and through the Gospel engendering faith in them. In other words: Like the merit of Christ, so also the sanctification of the Spirit and bestowal of faith are part and parcel of the eternal act of choosing itself, and do not merely, as the Calvinists teach, enter into the execution of the decree of election." (See also Trigl. 1087, Sol. Decl. XI, 76.)

Hence God's eternal election is always an election by way of the "ordo salutis," through the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the means of grace. And this the Common Confession clearly teaches.

Now let us examine the Common Confession on this doctrine. First we have what may be described as the 'a priori' statement on election. It says, "God from

eternity, solely because of His grace in Christ and without any cause whatever in man, elected as His own all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom and heirs of eternal life." Then follows the 'a posteriori' statement on this doctrine. We read, "The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has called us and assured us of our status before God, testifying to us that He has chosen us for Himself in Christ from the foundation of the world, and by the imputation of Christ's righteousness has given us the assurance that He will present us faultless before the throne of His glory." (Cf. Acts 13, 48; Ro. 8; Eph. 1; 1 Pet. 1, 1-9.).

Now the first section, the 'a priori' statement of the Common Confession does far more than merely "to set up a description of those who will be saved," (as claimed in the Wisconsin Synod review.). It says that "God from eternity . . . elected" them, i.e., "God elected . . . all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom . . . " It says more, it states that He elected them "as His Own." And this is simply another way of saying, He elected them "as believers in Christ," or "unto faith." In fact this is Luther's own expression taken from his explanation to the Second Article, where he says, " . . . Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature . . . that I may be His own . . ." Now since we become "His own" and are "His own" only by faith in Christ (Gal. 5, 26) it follows that to be elected "as His own" can only mean to be elected "unto faith," "into God's family, or as His own dear children." Moreover, if one is going to press terminology, then it would seem that the expression of the Common Confession, "elected as His own . . ." is closer to the Scriptural terminology, than is the expression "elected unto faith," for the Scriptures, in Ephesians 1, 5, speak of the believers as "predestinated . . . unto the adoption of children," that is, 'as His own dear children,' or "as His own." The Common Confession therefore clearly teaches an election 'unto faith,' only it uses Luther's terminology or a phraseology which is closer to that of the Scriptures. And surely there is nothing wrong with that!

The Common Confession also gives us "the positive assurance that this election is a cause of our salvation and what pertains thereto" (See the Wis. Synod Review, point b); but it does this not by way of the Calvinistic election "nude," apart from Christ and apart from what the theologians call the "ordo salutis," but, as the Scriptures teach, by means of an election "in Christ" (Eph. 1, 3,) and "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth". (2 Thess. 2, 13.). The Common Confession therefore says, "God from eternity, solely because of His grace in Christ, and without any cause whatever in man, elected as His own all those whom etc. . . ." Hence our salvation finds its cause not in ourselves, nor in the act of election standing by itself ('nude'), but in an election that is grounded on God's grace in Christ alone, a grace which was and is active in the "ordo salutis". For the eternal act of election is always an election "in Christ" or "in connection with Christ." The Common Confession therefore in describing the election from the 'a posteriori' viewpoint says also, "The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has called us and assured us of our status before God, testifying to us that He has chosen us for Himself in Christ from



the foundation of the world, and by the imputation of Christ's righteousness has given us the assurance that He will present us faultless before the throne of His glory." Hence the Common Confession clearly teaches an election which is the cause of our salvation only because of and in Christ. And this is precisely what the Scriptures teach, and what the Synodical Conference has always taught on this subject. (F. Pieper, Dogmatics III, p. 473; 486; Triglotta, 1065, 8.).

And the Common Confession also teaches "the definite recognition of the certainty of this election" (See Wis. Synod Review, point c); but not by looking back into the foreknowledge of God, nor by seeking to understand this truth through reflection on the mind of God, but by looking at the Gospel, which is the testimony of the Holy Spirit also on this point. The Common Confession therefore says, "The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has called us and assured us of our status before God, testifying to us that He has chosen us for Himself (or 'unto faith') in Christ from the foundation of the world, and by the imputation of Christ's righteousness has given us the assurance that He will present us faultless before the throne of His glory." The certainty of election is always only the 'certainty of faith' grounded in the Gospel. This is the kind of certainty with respect to election that is taught in the Holy Scriptures (Ro. 8, 32. 33,) in the Formula of Concord (Trigl. 1081, 54,) in Dr. Pieper's Dogmatics (Vol. III, p. 481-484,) and in this article of the Common Confession.

This brings us to Point two of the charges made in the Wisconsin Synod 1951 Proceedings (P. 130,) namely that this "article falls short of confessional clarity by failing to state that God's eternal decree of election . . . means that He has chosen each and every person, a specific number, unto faith and eternal life." We reply: while not using these very words the Common Confession teaches exactly what is asked for. It declares: "God from eternity . . . elected as His own all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom and heirs of eternal life." He elected all of them. That is a specific number. We may not know what that number is, but God does. And they are all included in God's election. The Common Confession therefore clearly states that a specific number has been chosen, namely "all the elect" (F. Pieper, Dog. III, p. 479) or "all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom, etc . . ." since "the elect are only those actually saved." (F. Pieper p. 479 ibid.).

With respect to point number three, namely that the Common Confession does not clearly and unmistakably assign to faith its place in God's act of election, we answer: Faith, according to Holy Scripture, belongs in the 'ordo salutis,' in the effective use of the means of grace, which God has elected to provide and through which He has resolved to elect 'as His own,' all His own. (2 Thess. 2, 13.). And this is exactly where the Common Confession places it, when it says, "The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has called us and assured us of our status (namely, as elect) before God, testifying to us that He has chosen us for Himself in Christ from the foundation of the world, and by the imputation of Christ's righteousness has given us the assurance that He will present us faultless before His throne of glory."

Here is where faith belongs in the doctrine of election. It is the response to the call that comes by the Gospel, by which the Holy Ghost assures us of our eternal election in Christ. And because the Common Confession clearly places it there, point three of the Review falls, and the article on Election is entirely vindicated.

Additional statements on this point in Common Confession No. II, Art. X (1) are, therefore, merely additional statements of "good faith," supporting the interpretation given above. They read: "The fact that the Church exists, that men believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is due ultimately to the eternal election of God, who has chosen us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world" . . . and "God by His Word and Sacrament calls men to faith and keeps them in that faith unto the end. Remaining humbly and gratefully conscious of its origin in God's elective will, the Church is preserved from the fatal delusion that it is a self-caused and self-sustaining institution, and the individual member lives and works in the blessed assurance that nothing shall separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

## THE MEANS OF GRACE, ARTICLE V.

We next come to Article V which deals with the Means of Grace. Concerning this article the Wisconsin Synod offers the following observation: "Whether the term 'verbal inspiration' be used or not, it is certainly necessary that a confessional document which undertakes to present the doctrine of Inspiration for our times and conditions speak clearly and unmistakably on two points:

- "a) that all that was written in the Holy Scriptures was given by the Holy Ghost;
- "b) that as a result of this inspiration, and as an article of faith, inerrancy be claimed not merely for the Scriptures as a whole, but for each particular statement that they contain.

"We note that Article V uses the expression, 'content and fitting word,' occurring in the Pittsburg Agreement and officially explained by one of the contracting parties as not meaning verbal inspiration. This interpretation has never been disavowed by the American Lutheran Church.

"Furthermore, the words 'Holy Scriptures in their entirety' are reminiscent of the 'Schriftganzen' of former days, as well as of 'the organic whole' of the ALC Declaration of 1938. The Pittsburg Agreement also speaks of the separate books of the Bible, 'taken together,' as a complete, errorless, unbreakable whole. Each of these expressions falls under the judgment of an earlier critique, namely that it 'makes the statement ambiguous because it may be understood in a limiting sense.' (Quartalschrift, 1939, p. 218.).

"Because the expression 'verbal inspiration' has been under fire by men who really object to the substance of the doctrine we are convinced that under these circumstances we should not even yield the term."

Now let us look at what the Common Confession says on this doctrine. We read, "The Holy Scriptures constitute His word to men . . . since the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired word of God . . . We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word, and this Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith (Cf. Smalcald Articles, Part II, Art. II) We pledge ourselves to teach all things taught in the Holy Scriptures, and nothing but that which is taught in the Holy Scriptures."

The sentence under fire in the Wisconsin Synod critique is this, "The Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired word of God."

First, concerning "content and fitting word," it is held that this expression was used in the Pittsburgh Agreement between the ULC and the ALC, and that when one who had accepted it, claimed that it did not teach verbal inspiration, the American Lutheran Church never disavowed this claim. Answer:

1. The expression 'content and fitting word' is used in the Common Confession in a different context from that of the Pittsburgh Agreement, for what was unacceptable in the Pittsburgh Agreement has been eliminated from the Common Confession.
2. It must be remembered that it was not the United Lutheran Church commission but one individual who held that the Pittsburgh Agreement did not teach verbal inspiration, and no individual can be held to commit all contracting parties to his personal interpretation of such an agreement.
3. One cannot insist that a church body is morally obligated to disavow every irresponsible statement of individuals concerning agreements arrived at in good faith.
4. The American Lutheran Church Commission has since accepted a statement in Common Confession No. II which distinctly acknowledges even the term "verbal inspiration," hence has shown 'good faith' on its part.
5. The expression 'content and fitting word' in reality is taken from the doctrinal agreement arrived at between the Breslau Synod and the Freikirche of Germany, an agreement to which also the Wisconsin Synod has consented. In this document we read, "Die Schrift ist goettlichen Ursprungs und goettlicher Art, weil Gottes Heiliger Geist die Schreiber in seinen Dienst genommen und ihnen die Schrift nach ihrem Sachgehalt (Realinspiration) und nach ihrer Wortgestaltung (Verbalinspiration) einggegeben hat." (Theological Quarterly, July 1948, Volume 45, p. 203). This is about the equivalent of our English "content and fitting word."
6. Furthermore, in American Lutheran Church circles the expression "content and fitting word" has been used to express verbal inspiration, as for

instance by Dr. Reu in his essay, "In the Interest of Lutheran Unity." (Pp. 68. 69.). In this article Dr. Reu uses this phrase to translate the Latin 'suggestio verbi' and in that very connection defends "verbal inspiration" as something demanded by Scripture even unto "the formation of the Word" ("Wortgestaltung") and says, "the real driving, urging, writing and acting agent was not he (the writer) himself but God and His Spirit."

To say, therefore, as the Common Confession does, "The Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word" is a fine way of expressing exactly what is meant by verbal inspiration. It is like saying, the Holy Spirit supplied "the content and the word that befits this content," or "the content and each word fitted into its proper place to express that content," or "the content and the word in its very formation as befits that content."

Now when the Common Confession continues to say, "therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired word of God," it clearly teaches the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures with respect to that content and with respect to each fitting word as it expresses that content.

But what about the objection that these words, "Scriptures in their entirety," are reminiscent of certain former and faulty expressions like "Schriftganzen," "Organic whole," and others, and should for that reason be challenged? We reply, — Surely such an argument cannot stand, for how can an expression which is good and adequate in itself be rejected merely because it reminds one of expressions that are not good and adequate in themselves?

Furthermore, the term "Schriftganzen" has nothing whatever to do with the subject of inspiration. It refers to a faulty rule of interpretation. For instance, instead of explaining Scripture by clear Scripture, men held that one ought to interpret the Bible by some sort of "Scriptural totality" which they called "Das Schriftganze." Reference to this term is therefore out of place here, where the subject is not interpretation but inspiration.

But is the expression, "Scriptures in their entirety" a good and adequate expression for the plenary, verbal inspiration of Holy Scripture? We think it is. Webster's Unabridged Dictionary gives this definition of "entirety," "the state of being entire." And for "entire" we have: "1. a) complete in all parts and undiminished; unimpaired, whole. b) consisting of one piece, undivided. 2. Without mixture of alloy or anything; unqualified." Under the study of synonyms we have, "'whole' and 'total' refer to an object made up of parts, 'whole' implying that none is missing. 'Entire' and 'complete' do not necessarily imply parts. 'Entire' describes an object as continuous and unbroken . . . 'entire day' . . . The same object may according to the point of view at the same time be 'whole' . . . and 'entire.' A 'whole' bridge may be shipped in parts, but it is not 'entire' so long as the parts are not put together . . ."

Hence to speak of the entire Scriptures, or of Scriptures in their entirety is to speak of the Scriptures in all their parts and words properly fitted together.

The argument has been made that 'entire' does not necessarily imply 'parts' and that therefore the word in this connection does not necessarily imply all the parts and words of Scripture. Now it is true that in certain expressions like, 'an entire day,' the word 'entire' may not necessarily imply parts, but in this case parts are necessarily implied, because of the plural, "Holy Scriptures in their entirety," hence parts, and because of the context, where the Scriptures are described as consisting of "content and fitting word," hence consisting of parts. The expression as used here in the Common Confession can only mean, that the Holy Scriptures in their entire content, and with every word formed and fitted into its proper place are the inspired Word of God. And that is both verbal and plenary inspiration.

That this is the interpretation also of the American Lutheran Church commissioners is seen from their willingness to add additional statements supporting such an interpretation of the Common Confession in Part II, Art. VI, where we read, "The Holy Scriptures are God's verbally inspired Word, that is, God moved men to write what He wanted recorded in the words He wanted employed. They alone constitute God's inerrant Word to men." See also Art. VIII, B (4), where a "brother in the Lord" is one who "does not deny, contradict, or ignore any word of God in the Holy Scriptures," and point (5) where "neglecting and omitting any part of the Word of God" is spoken of as creating "divisions in the Church."

But, what about the paragraph on the Lord's Supper? Exception is taken by our Wisconsin Synod brethren to the expression "Most intimate communion." The argument of the Wisconsin Synod reads, "The paragraph on the Lord's Supper states that in the Sacrament Christ enters into the most intimate communion with the members of His Church. If this is meant to refer to the communion of faith, it dare not be restricted to the Sacrament of the Altar, since Scripture knows no such limitation. If something else is meant beyond this, the article will lend encouragement and support to the current trend toward Sacramentalism, which is contrary to the Scriptural concept of the Means of Grace."

To that we reply as follows: The Common Confession says in full, "Christ is not only present at the celebration of the Sacrament, but in this Sacrament He enters into the most intimate communion with the members of His Church, bringing to them His Body and Blood by which He made atonement for their sins."

It seems to us that those who have written this evaluation for the Wisconsin Synod have failed to realize the purpose of this paragraph. Its purpose is to reject the position of the Reformed, namely that Christ is present at the Lord's Supper with no other blessings than those offered elsewhere by the Word. For them there is no other kind of communion with Christ than the spiritual communion of faith. For them the Lord's Supper therefore can offer nothing more than Baptism, nothing more than absolution, nothing more than the preaching of Grace, or the reading of the Gospel,

namely, the spiritual communion of faith. Against this we say, the Scriptures teach another kind of communion of Christ with His members, which we call the sacramental communion, which takes place when we eat and drink in the Sacrament, receiving Christ's Body and Blood. Both the spiritual and the sacramental communion are an intimate communion of Christ with His members. But only the Lord's Supper offers both, the spiritual and the sacramental communion of Christ. It is perfectly correct therefore, with the Common Confession to say that "in the Lord's Supper Christ enters into the most intimate communion with His members." We cannot understand, therefore why this expression should be faulted here.

## ART. IX. THE CHURCH.

Let us now turn to the article on the Church, and note the objections raised against the Common Confession on this doctrine.

The Wisconsin Synod charges: (Proc., 1951, p. 132 ff.).

1. That this article of the Common Confession externalizes the concept of the Church; a) by treating the "commission to preach the Gospel" throughout as a "duty," a concept which, it is claimed, "applies to the recalcitrant Old Adam," and which reduces the administration of the Means of Grace to a "job imposed on man"; and  
b) by reducing fidelity regarding the Means of Grace to a "mere question of 'duty'";
2. That the statement, "this use of the Means of Grace constitutes the mark of the Church" is indispensable to this article of the Common Confession. (Art. IX, (1).

Two additional charges are made, but we shall treat them later.

Let us look now at Charge Number One. The Common Confession is accused of externalizing the concept of the Church, that is, of placing too much emphasis on the confessing Church with its meetings, its organizations, its various boards and commissions etc. Now a Church like ours with its vast mission program is bound to be more active in its external work than one whose mission program is less extensive. It is good that we are cautioned against forgetting the spiritual side of our work. And we are willing to listen to such words of caution from our brethren. But on the other hand we must just as earnestly caution our brethren in the Wisconsin Synod to be on their guard against antinomianism, and not to deny what the Scriptures and our Confessions state, namely, that to do the Lord's Will, to preach the Gospel, to carry on Mission work, and to teach His Word is indeed commanded us and is our duty.

For example, when at Antioch the Apostle Paul with Barnabas turned away from the Jews to work among the Gentiles, he said, "For so hath the Lord com-

manded us ("entetaltai") saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth." (Acts 13, 47.). We note that to describe the Lord's command, the Apostle uses the word "entetaltai," the perfect form of "entellomai," a word used to describe the commandments of the decalogue (Matt. 15, 4. 19; John 8, 5.). Here then St. Paul speaks of his commission to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles as commanded him by the Lord. Shall we now charge the Lord with having thereby externalized the concept of the Church? Or with addressing merely Paul's recalcitrant Old Adam? Or with reducing the Apostle's commission and use of the Means of Grace to a mere job imposed on him? Moreover, the Lord Jesus used this very Greek word ("entellomai" and "entolee") in its verb and noun forms when He calls upon His disciples to keep His commandments (John 13, 34; 14, 15; 15, 10. 12. 14. 17; 1 John 2, 8; 3, 23 cp. Matthew 5, 19 22, 36-40; Romans 7, 11 where used of the Old Testament laws.)

In the Apology (Trigl. 437, 51 ff) reference is made to 1 Corinthians 7, 2, "let every man have his own wife," and this is called "the command of the Holy Ghost" ("dem Heiligen Geist sein Gebot;" "Mandatum Spiritu Sancti") and the manifest command of God" ("Dei Praeceptum"; "das oeffentliche Gottesgebot").

And when our brethren of the Wisconsin Synod restrict the use of the term "duty" to the Old Adam, and condemn its use for the Christian as externalizing the Church, they also condemn Luther's use of the term, who in explaining the first Article of the Creed says, "for all of which it is my duty to thank and praise Him, serve and obey Him . . ." ("Des alles ich ihm . . . schuldig bin"; "pro omnibus . . . inservire . . . debeo, 'I must' "). Furthermore in his large Catechism (Trigl. p. 681, 19) Luther says, "Now since all we possess . . . is daily given, preserved . . . by God, it is readily . . . concluded that it is our duty . . . to serve Him ("so sind wir ja schuldig"; "debere nos, 'we must' "), as He demands and has enjoined in the Ten Commandments. (Quovadmodum hoc ipsum decem praeceptis a nobis exigit (i.e., 'requires, enforces, exacts, demands') et faciendum praecepit; "so sind wir ja schuldig . . . ihm ganz und gar zu dienen, wie er auch durch die zehn Gebote fordert und befohlen hat." ) And later Luther says (Trigl. 683, 22) in His Large Catechism, "Yet Christians (in contrast to unbelievers) have this advantage that they acknowledge themselves in duty bound to serve God for all these things and to be obedient to Him (which the world knows not how to do)" ("id debere agnoscunt"; "doch haben die Christen den Vorteil, dass sie sich des schuldig erkennen, ihm dafuer . . . gehorsam zu sein"). Shall we charge Luther with externalizing the concept of the Church here? Is he addressing these words merely to the recalcitrant Old Adam? And has he reduced the Christian's service to a mere duty imposed on him?

Surely then we must not be faulted when in the Common Confession we acknowledge ourselves in duty bound to be obedient to the commission of our Lord and to preach the Gospel; or when we say, "it is the duty of the Church to be faithful to its Lord and to His Word.

Nor is it in conformity with our Confessional Writings to apply the concept of "duty" to the recalcitrant Old Adam as exclusively as is insisted upon in the Wisconsin Synod Review. The Formula of Concord says, "It is to be noted with especial diligence that when we speak of good works which are in accordance with God's Law (for otherwise they are not good works) then the Law has only one sense, namely, the immutable will of God . . . But when man is born anew by the Spirit of God and liberated from the Law . . . and is led by the Spirit of Christ, he lives according to the immutable will of God comprised in the Law, and so far as he is born anew does everything from a cheerful spirit." (Trigl. 967, 15.).

Hence the difference is not one of terms but of attitudes. The Christian according to the New Man never looks upon his duties and God's commandments as a job or a burden, but as a joy and a pleasure, for with Paul he says, "I delight in the Law of God after the inward man." (Romans 7, 22.). According to the Old Man the Christian needs the Law as a club, and for the knowledge of the immutable will of God, since "the image of God" (i.e. "the perfect knowledge of God") is not restored fully in this life. According to the New Man the law is there from within, for says the Lord, "I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts." (Jer. 31, 33.). When a Christian therefore speaks of his duty he speaks not exclusively of that which is thrust upon him nor merely of that which he intends to impose upon his Old Adam, but of that wherein he delights according to the New Man, of that which is written in his heart. A Christian is never just an Old Man or a New Man exclusively. He is one person having both. His new Nature needs no law, but because he has both the Old and the New Natures the Christian needs the law for the Old, and according to the New gladly uses it.

As to the second point, The Wisconsin Synod insists upon the indispensability of the following sentence: "The use of the Means of Grace constitute the marks of the Church." We answer: The article clearly teaches that "Christ calls all his members into fellowship with Himself, and also unites the members in fellowship with one another" "through the means of grace;" that the power of the Means of grace is not nullified by the presence or activity of unbelievers; that the efficacy of the Word is inherent "in the Word of God itself." Accordingly, the church is built by the means of grace alone. For that reason they have been called "the Marks of the Church." It seems to us that what the Means of Grace do is far more important than what they are called; hence we have in this article everything we really need. We are happy to note, however, that in Common Confession II the desire of the Wisconsin Synod has been met. Common Confession Part II says, "The means of grace are . . . the only genuine marks of the Church, and by them Christ through the Holy Spirit creates and preserves faith in the hearts of men." (Art. VIII. A (3).)

A further objection of the Wisconsin Synod (1951 Proceedings, p. 134) reads: ". . . we cannot approve of the statement that, 'We must also be alert and susceptible to the Lord's leading to establish and maintain fellowship with those whom



He has made one with us in the faith.' How can we recognize 'those He has made one with us in the faith'? Their faith is invisible until it comes out into the open by word and deed. How can we know 'the wayward and the erring' except by their confession?"

Our answer: The word "faith" is used in two senses, once in the sense of the faith by which one believes, which theologians call the "fides qua creditur," and then in the sense of the faith which we believe, like a creed or confession, called "fides quae creditur." Here the Common Confession is clearly speaking of the "fides quae creditur," the faith we confess before men. When the Common Confession, therefore, says, "We must also be alert . . . to establish and maintain fellowship with those whom He has made one with us in the faith," it simply means, that we must join in fellowship with those who confess what we also confess. And this is precisely what the Wisconsin Synod and we want.

In its concluding criticism of this article, the Wisconsin Synod says, "To quote John 17, 21 in this connection is also an obvious misapplication of the text. If we 'are His brethren' must we then be mindful . . . that we . . . 'may be one'? Is this a oneness of our making? Is it an outward union?"

Answer: In His intercessory prayer (John 17, 11.21.22) Jesus asks, "that they" (the believers) "may be one even as We" (the Father and the Son) "are one," and "that they also may be one with us." Hence we should be as one with God and with one another as the persons of the Godhead are one with each other. This is first of all an inner, invisible oneness of being and a oneness of faith. And this oneness of being is to be effected in all believers through the Word (John 17, 20) so that they all may truly be one in what they are and believe, i.e. the one spiritual Body of Christ, the Una Sancta. But this oneness the world cannot see.

However, this is not the only oneness meant here, for we are to be as one as the Father and the Son are one. And theirs is not only a oneness of being, but also a oneness in confession, a oneness in what they say and do. Jesus said so. "Even as the Father said unto me, so I speak" (Jn. 12, 50,) He said, and "the Holy Ghost . . . shall teach you . . . whatsoever I have said unto you." (Jn. 14, 24-26; Also Jn. 10, 37-39; Jn. 14, 10. 11.). Here then, in their words, in what they say and teach the perfect oneness of the Persons of the holy Godhead is observable. Even so we all are to be one with God and with His Words, that together with all other believers we will say and confess what God says in His Word. Therefore the more we are one with God in His Word (Jn. 17, 17. 20) the more will we also be one with every other believer who is one with God in His Word. Now the world cannot observe the oneness of faith ("fides qua creditur"), but it can observe our oneness with the Word of God, and our oneness with the words and confessions of other Christians. And the more the world observes this oneness with the Word of God and this oneness with one another in the confession of this Word, (whether as individuals or as groups,) the more the world will be convinced of Christ's Messiahship. (John 17, 21.). This is

certainly the teaching of this text, and the Common Confession is exactly right when it so interprets it.

## ART. XII. THE LAST THINGS.

Finally we come to the article entitled, "The Last Things." On this the Wisconsin Synod has the following to say:

"Our Lutheran Confessions make, without further qualification, the solemn statement that the Pope is 'the very Anti-Christ' (Trigl. p. 475, 10.). — 2 Thess. 2 provides the Biblical warrant for accepting this as an article of faith. But the qualified statement of the Common Confession ('still clearly discernible') leaves room for uncertainty as to the permanence of this conclusion.

"We therefore hold that at this point the Common Confession does not adequately restate the Lutheran doctrine, nor does it treat this matter as an article of faith, but rather as a historical judgment."

Two points are made in this criticism:

1. That "the Common Confession does not adequately restate the Lutheran doctrine" of the Antichrist; and
2. That the Common Confession does not "treat this matter as an article of faith, but rather as a historical judgment."

Let us then examine the Common Confession and evaluate these charges. The Common Confession says, "Among the signs of His approaching return for judgment the distinguishing features of the Antichrist, as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures, are still clearly discernible in the Roman papacy, the climax of all human usurpations to Christ's authority in the Church."

The Wisconsin Synod is not satisfied with this declaration, and gives its reasons, saying, "the qualified statement of the Common Confession ('still' clearly discernible) leaves room for uncertainty as to the permanency of this conclusion." Evidently there is fear that this statement could be interpreted to mean, that, whereas the features of the Antichrist are still clearly discernible in the papacy today, the time may come when they will no longer be discernible in the papacy, but, perhaps, in some other anti-Christian ism.

Answer: The text of the Common Confession cannot be so interpreted, because it immediately declares the Papacy to be "the climax of all human usurpations of Christ's authority in the Church." The thoughts expressed in these words can best be illustrated by an inverted "V," thus A, its apex symbolizing the climax. Everything, whether before or after, is on a lower plane. Since then the Papacy is declared to be "the climax of all human usurpations of Christ's authority in the Church," it follows that all other developments of a similar nature will always remain on a lower level.

There may be other climaxes, but none can ever reach the apex of the Papacy, for this will always be "the climax of all human usurpations of Christ's authority in the Church."

The phrase, "still discernible" ought therefore to be understood to mean, that despite rationalism, despite Marxism, despite Modernism, despite Communism, despite all the many anti-Christian isms that have arisen since the time of the Reformation, "the features of the Antichrist, as portrayed in the Holy Scriptures, are still clearly discernible in the Roman papacy."

The Second Charge is that the Common Confession does not "treat this matter as an article of faith, but rather as a historical judgment."

Our answer is: The Common Confession does not treat this matter as a historical judgment pure and simple, as claimed by the Wisconsin Synod, but rather as a historical judgment based on Scripture, for the Common Confession says that "the distinguishing features of the Antichrist" which are discernible in the Roman Papacy, are "portrayed in the Holy Scriptures." We must remember also that the Scriptures not only give us the distinguishing marks by which the Anti-Christ is to be recognized, but also the specific assurance that he shall "be revealed." (2 Thess. 2, 8.). A judgment formed on the basis of such marks and such an assurance of Scriptures is therefore to be regarded as constituting far more than a mere human opinion, or a mere historical judgment, since it involves the realm of the Holy Spirit.

## ANTITHESES

The Common Confession has often been faulted also for failing to reject error by means of antitheses. This criticism operates on the assumption that such antitheses must always have a form like those in our Confessional writings and in the Brief Statement. However, the Common Confession abounds in antitheses, (e. g. "His own image" is the antithesis of "man's image"; "all men" is the antithesis of "some"; and "freely" is the antithesis of "conditionally," etc.). A very effective form of antitheses is found also in the "exclusive particles" (*particulae exclusivae*) which the Holy Scriptures employ frequently, and which Luther pressed in his translation of Romans 3, 28, and in defense of "justification by grace, through faith alone." (See also Eph. 2, 8. 9 "Not of yourselves," "Not of works"; and Gal. 2, 16, "Not by the works of the Law," and "no flesh"). For the purpose of rejecting error the authors of the Common Confession preferred this type of antitheses rather than the other. By cursory count the writer has found in the Common Confession at least forty-three such "exclusive particles."

For example: The false doctrine that there is in man's behavior or faith, something which might have caused God to elect him, is rejected by four "exclusive particles," since God elected His own, "solely because of His grace in Christ"; "without . . . cause . . . in man"; "without any cause . . . in man"; "without any cause whatsoever in man." And the false doctrine that man is able somehow to cooperate

in his conversion, is rejected by three "exclusive particles," for God converts, "without . . . cooperation . . . from sinful man"; "without any cooperation . . . from sinful man"; "without any cooperation whatsoever from sinful man." Also the error that there is in natural man some innate ability for good, or that he has the power to free himself from the tyranny of sin, is rejected by three "exclusive particles," since man is, "unable to observe God's divine commands"; and "cannot free himself by his own powers"; so that "only God can set him free."

He therefore, who faults the Common Confession for not rejecting error through antitheses has failed to note its many kind of antithetical statements, and especially the effective force of its more than forty exclusive particles.

The question has been asked, "What if subsequent history shall prove that the Common Confession did not finally and conclusively settle all the doctrinal differences which once had divided us from the American Lutheran Church? Or what if one of the contracting parties begins to place a false interpretation on the Common Confession, or fails to live up to its provisions? Would the other party then be compelled to rescind its action of adoption? Certainly not, because the acceptance of this document in 1950 constituted no more than a "settlement in good faith." Failure on the part of one or the other party to live up to this agreement in doctrine will certainly prevent ultimate fellowship, but it cannot invalidate the original agreement. Only if the Common Confession itself should contain false doctrine, could its rescission be made a matter of conscience and compulsion.

One final observation. It has been said, that if the Common Confession is really adequate and clear, then why are so many attacks made upon it even in our own circles? And why does it take so much effort and so many words to defend it? To that we reply: the same can be said of the three ecumenical Creeds, of the Confessional Writings, of the Scriptures, yea of Christ Himself. Look for example, how much was written in the Apology in order to defend the Augsburg Confession, and yet we do not for that reason discard the Augsburg Confession. Is Christ not God because His deity has been challenged? Are the Scriptures neither inspired, nor adequate, nor clear because they have suffered attack, and because volumes have been written in their defense? Surely, none will grant validity to this argument or permit its use against the Common Confession!

With the full realization that the future of our fellowship is at stake the writer offers these words of defense in behalf of the Common Confession. He trusts that they will be accepted as a contribution towards a fraternal but frank evaluation of the charges that have been made against this document, so that in Christ brother may help brother, according to Scripture and the Confessions, without malice and in love.

Theo. F. Nickel  
Chicago, Illinois

February 10, 1954.

Note:

Insertions by the author:

Page 2 — Line 21 (namely, — 1951)

Page 8 — Line 28 (i.e. the reconciliation — Trigl. 143, 81.)

Page 12 — Line 2 (contritio — legalis)

Page 12 — Line 26 Insert "De Servo arbitrio" — Luther — St. Louis — Vol.  
XVIII, 1717, ff.)

Page 15 — Line 2 (God did not)

Page 17 — Line 12 (or 'unto faith')

Page 18 — Line 9 (namely, as elect)

Page 18 — Line 22 (Christ)

Underscoring usually by the author, except in presenting the Wisconsin Synod Proceedings at the beginning of each section.

# "RELIGIOUS UNIONISM"

The Brief Statement has the following to say on the topic of unionism: "We repudiate unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the church, Rom. 16:17; 2 John 9.10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21."

In our study of "unionism according to the Brief Statement," we must pay attention, first to the word "fellowship," secondly, to the word "church" fellowship and finally learn that unionism is "church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine."

Let us also hear immediately what the Common Confession has to say on this point, which in a certain sense is even more explicit on this point than the Brief Statement. It says: "It is the duty of the Church to be faithful to its Lord and His Word in all its testimony, to be steadfast in its confession of His truth at all times, and to avoid and combat error. It is the duty of the Church to mold and keep its practice in conformity with the Lord's directives in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore we dare not condone error or have altar and pulpit fellowship and unscriptural cooperation with erring individuals, church bodies, or church groups that refuse to be corrected by God's Word." Thus the Common Confession, too, speaks out very plainly against "unionism, that is, church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine."

Religious unionism, accordingly, has to do with church fellowship. Whenever we speak of church fellowship, we do not refer to the CHURCH which is the holy Christian, the communion of saints, nor do we refer to the FELLOWSHIP which joins us to Christ as the Head of His Church and to one another as members of one body, the Body of Christ, constituted by faith, invisible and not at all discernible by man. Of this fellowship the apostle speaks in Eph. 4:4-6, saying: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." The oneness or unity in Christ is indeed the basis for church fellowship. As members of the Body of Christ, Christ is our Head, who directs the entire Body and every member of it. The directive is His Word, to which every member of His Body owes absolute and unconditional obedience, obedience of heart, soul, mind, word, and deed. This united obedience to Christ, the Head, is the unity of the Spirit of which the apostle speaks in this text. This unity of the Spirit is to become manifest in word and deed, in doctrine and practice, so manifest, according to John 17:22, that even the world will take note of this marvelous oneness in the midst of sin and strife in the world. "Christ wants His Church to be as unified outwardly as it is already unified inwardly in Christ"; "Christ just as earnestly wants this outward unity to be a true picture of the inward, a genuine

unity of the kind that exists between Him and His Father." And this manifestation of the unity of the Spirit in word and deed, in doctrine and practice, we call church fellowship. "In establishing church fellowship, the deciding factor is that of a common profession . . . Not the state of some one's heart, but the expression of his lips and his life are the basis of calling any one our brother. We may be convinced that our fellow-Lutheran is a sincere Christian, but that is not our reason for being associated with him; the ground of that association is his agreement with us in profession." CTM II, 581.

The unity of the Spirit Christians are "to keep in the bond of peace." This peace consists in perfect agreement with, and obedience to, the directives which Christ, the Head, has issued and is constantly issuing to the members of His Body in His Word. Any word or deed, any doctrine or practice that is contrary to the word and will of Christ will disturb the peace, the harmony, the concord, the good order, the good understanding (all inclusive meanings of *eirænae*) which Christians as members of Christ's Body are to have among themselves and by which they are to demonstrate and manifest the unity of the Spirit and by which they are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit as related to one another as well as to Christ, their Head. The peace, then, by which Christians are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit and demonstrate this unity consists in their complete obedience to the Word of Christ, in their confession of faith which conforms strictly to the will and word of Christ or is orthodox; in other words, it consists in Scriptural doctrine and a life or practice that is in agreement therewith. It manifests itself in the confession of the "one Lord," who not only has redeemed us unto God by His blood, but also has commanded us to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded, so that we may not fail of the salvation He has wrought for us; of the "one faith," by which we not only accept His salvation, but also live in complete obedience to His Word and will; of the "one baptism," by which He has not only established His covenant with us, but also obligated us to live under Him and serve Him within the directives of this covenant laid down in the Scriptures; of the "one God and Father of all," whom we are to fear, love, and trust above all things and of whose every word we are to stand in trembling awe.

If any one in word or deed disturbs this peace and harmony of the Church by a teaching or practice that is not in agreement with the Word and will of Christ, — and because of the Christian's sinful flesh this may happen to any one, and every Christian should fear and tremble lest it happen to him, — his fellow-Christians are not to stand idly by and let him continue in the error of his way and in the peace-disturbing of the Church — it is touching and disturbing the inner unity and will possibly destroy it if not dealt with at once, — no, the apostle says: "Ye which are spiritual," still firm in the unity of the Spirit, "restore such an one in the spirit of meekness"; and again he says: "Warn them that are unruly," the ataktous, those that deviate from the prescribed rule, from the directives which Christ, the Head, has issued and laid down in His Word. If all admonitions remain unheeded and he thus proves himself to be an adherent to false doctrine, one that

refuses to be corrected by God's Word, Christians are to withdraw from such a one. They are to renounce religious fellowship with him or them and thus endeavor, even to this extreme degree of withdrawing, to maintain and retain peace, concord, and harmony within the Church, a life within the directives of Christ's Word and will, and thus endeavor also to keep the unity of the Spirit.

Not to withdraw from such as thus have disturbed the peace of the Church, but to continue religious fellowship with them and behave as though the peace had not been disturbed at all, to cry, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace," we call unionism. What then is unionism? It is church fellowship without doctrinal unity.

Such fellowship may pertain to an individual in our private life and personal dealings. If he lives and teaches otherwise than God's Word teaches and refuses to be corrected by God's Word and thus becomes for himself an adherent to false doctrine, we must withdraw from him in a religious way, lest we become an offense to him, a stumbling block, over which he may fall into greater error and perhaps even fall from faith by our indifferent and, therefore, loveless attitude, whereby we would condone error and deny the truth. This should guide us in our private and personal relation to fellow-Christians outside of church and congregational life, of whom we may assume that membership in a heterodox church is held by them not wilfully and stubbornly, but rather from lack of Christian knowledge and understanding. They share with us and we with them the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism, the same God and Father of all, and their membership in a heterodox church, because of a lack of knowledge on their part, is an act of a happy or unhappy inconsistency. Under these circumstances we may have private religious fellowship with them as we meet them by chance or under special circumstances in our private life. If such contact, however, should continue for any length of time, we certainly in a spirit of love and with patience, perhaps much patience, will point out to him the wrong of his membership in a heterodox church, but will bear with him as long as we may assume that his membership is held in weakness of Christian knowledge. If he, however, in our extended contact with him, should manifest himself for his own person to be an adherent to false doctrine, a contender for error and disturber of the peace by which we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, our attitude must change; we must withdraw from him in a religious way and thus decline to become a partaker of his evil behavior. The Common Confession, therefore, states correctly: "We dare not condone error or have altar and pulpit fellowship and unscriptural cooperation with erring individuals," etc.

Fellowship may refer to congregations. This is properly called church-fellowship. It refers to the visible church, to the organized church or congregation. You cannot think of a visible church without an organization. It is perfectly in order when our congregations for their organization quote the words of Scripture: "Let all things be done decently and in order," 1 Cor. 14:40. It is God's will that Christians (professing Christians for that matter, for we can only recognize such as Christians), should unite in local congregations. Local congregations are to organize for the



administration of the Office of the Keys. They are to establish the ministry in their midst; they are to conduct services; they are to work in the Gospel. They are to follow the example of First Church in Jerusalem: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayer," Acts 2:42. First Church in Jerusalem practiced church fellowship by joint worship and joint work in the Gospel. So did the church at Antioch. When they were commanded to separate Paul and Barnabas for the work among the Gentiles, they by fasting and prayer ordained them and sent them away. By joint worship and work in the Gospel they practiced church fellowship. That is what is meant by church-fellowship. "Under church-fellowship we, of course, have in view the external factors which may be summarized as joint work and worship. In its concrete form it is accordingly the participation of congregations and church bodies, of ministers and church officials, in spiritual work and religious worship." CTM II, 580. And wherever a peace-disturbing element entered the congregation or threatened to enter it, a false doctrine or an unscriptural practice, they did not begin to quarrel about fundamentals and non-fundamentals, they firmly resisted every error. Firmly, yet kindly, St. Paul dealt with the Galatians, who were troubled by errorists. "Brethren," he writes to them "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Gal. 5:1,2. St. Paul's whole procedure with the Galatians shows that this obligation of love applies also when the weakness we meet in brethren is one of error in doctrine. In a spirit of meekness indeed, but by no means in a spirit of weakness, the apostle deals with them and instructs them and seeks to build them up in their faith that they might overcome their error. If brethren, however, refuse to obey the truth and stubbornly persist in error, they must be put away from among the fellowship. St. Paul wrote to the same Galatians: "He that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be," Gal. 5:10; and again: "I would they were cut off which troubled you," Gal. 5:12; again: Gal. 1:6-10; to the Romans he writes: c.16:17; to the 2 Thess. c.3:6; etc.

Fellowship pertains also to church bodies. The first Christian congregations practiced church fellowship also beyond the confines of their local congregations. We do not know just what kind of an organization they had, if any, beyond their local congregations, but we do know that they kept in touch with one another and practiced church fellowship, joint worship and joint work in the Gospel. Jointly with their sister-congregations, wherever they were "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayer." When St. Paul returned from his first missionary journey, he reported not only to the congregation at Antioch, but also to the churches of Phoenicia and Samaria and to the church at Jerusalem, where, "they were received OF THE CHURCH, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them" Acts 15:1-4. This meeting at Jerusalem also shows how closely the congregations throughout the world at that time had banded together for "the conservation and

promotion of the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10) and a united defense against schism and sectarianism. (Rom. 16:17)." Jointly and unitedly we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; jointly and unitedly we are to defend ourselves against all who disturb this peace by schism or sectarianism, by departing from the truth of God. Jointly and unitedly we are to stand up firmly and decisively against any error or departure from the teachings of God's holy Word. We cannot tolerate error; we cannot condone it; we cannot take part in it even by silence; we cannot stop or bargain as to the amount of error that we could possibly stand for, knowing that the apostle says: "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Every clearly revealed doctrine is God's doctrine and must be accepted by us if we want to be obedient members of the Body of Christ. No one is permitted to add or to take away. No one is to go beyond or to fall short. No one is permitted to make a distinction between fundamental and nonfundamental doctrines; no one is to be a fundamentalist. Every departure from any clearly revealed doctrine of Scripture must be reprov'd even to the point of breaking off church fellowship. Yes, this refers also to church bodies, in which congregations have united for joint worship and joint work in the Gospel. Correctly the Common Confession, therefore, says: "We dare not condone error or have altar and pulpit fellowship and unscriptural cooperation with erring individuals, church bodies, or church groups that refuse to be corrected by God's Word."

Now, to continue or practice religious fellowship, joint worship and joint work in the Gospel with such as disturb the peace of the church by adhering to false doctrine, we call unionism. What, then is unionism? To unite in worship and religious work and to make common religious cause with those who depart from the truth, or any part of the truth clearly revealed in Scripture. "Unionism is church fellowship without doctrinal unity." Another description: "To unite in worship and religious work and make common cause with churches with whom we are not in doctrinal unity." "Treating errorists as though they were brethren in the faith." Many are the passages that forbid this: Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6; 1 Tim. 6:3-5, etc., etc. This may be the place to give a closer study to Matt. 7:15; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 Thess. 3:14.15; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 3:10.

Rom. 16:17ff. This passage has been treated in the brochure issued by President Behnken. It should be noted, however, that the passage deals only with the avoidance of errorists qua errorists; nothing is said about the errorist who is willing to submit to Scripture and is amenable to admonition and correction, to say nothing of the man who has been branded errorist undeservedly, through misunderstanding. It does not, therefore, bear on such actions as our negotiations with the ALC or our Bad Boll Conferences.

Matt. 7:15. To my mind the prophets here spoken of are within the pale of Christendom; they are deceptively like the genuine proclaimers of the will of God, the true prophets; they call Jesus, in some sense, 'Lord,' v. 21, and have some ecclesiastical 'success' to show for their activities, verse 22.

I Cor. 1:10 is addressed to factional exaltation of individual teachers in the church (cf. the whole of chs. 1-4) and is not spoken in opposition to error. What holds over against faction and party-spirit, holds against division and heresy too, of course. (The to auto legeete should not be pressed to mean a demand for absolute uniformity in the formulation of teaching; Paul himself has a rich variety in his presentation, and the formal differences between him and the other apostles, with whom he felt himself to be in perfect harmony, are very great.)

II Cor. 6:14-18. The antithesis is obviously between the Church of God at Corinth and the pagan world (cf. apistou 15; eidolon 16, and the OT echoes in v. 17, Is. 52:11; Jer. 51:45). Its application to errorists is indirect (insofar as Falschglaube is always ein stueck Unglaube and therefore anomia, v. 14, cf. Mt. 7:23; cp. I John 5:21, where the heresy of Cerinthus is apparently branded as idolatry); the passage therefore says nothing, and can say nothing, in regard to winning errorists by testimony to them.

II Thess. 3:14-15 deals with congregational discipline of those who refuse to heed the Apostle's admonition to orderly sobriety and industry (the eschatological loafers of vv. 11-12 are meant). von Dobschuetz: "Er (Paulus) fordert Gehorsam nicht nur fuer sein Evangelium als Gottes Wort . . . sondern auch fuer seine Anordnungen in sittlicher und kultischer Beziehung . . . Vergleicht man die Disziplinarordnung Mt. 18:15-17, so entspricht die paulinische Anordnung 18:17: der Brief des Apostels (bereits die 2. oder 3. Mahnung vgl. I Thess. 4:11; 5:14) ist in der Gemeinde vorgelesen; hat das nichts geholfen, so tritt Ausschluss ein . . . Motiv dabei ist nicht das pharisaeische sich selbst rein erhalten, oder das spaetere kirchliche Prinzip der Heiligkeit der Gemeinde, sondern echt apostolisch die heilsame Wirkung auf den betreffenden Suender: er soll beschaemt und so gebessert werden." — The application to the doctrinal sphere, especially to the case of erring church bodies, is therefore indirect, inasmuch as doctrinal aberration, too, is disobedience over against the apostolic word. In this wider application too, von Dobschuetz's comment is worth remembering: "Die christliche Zucht kann scharf sein, aber sie ist doch von der Liebe getragen."

I Tim. 6:3-5. The application to errorists is direct, clear, and beyond doubt.

Titus 3:10. "A 'heiretikos anthroopos' is a man whose ill-tempered insistence on his own particular opinions creates factions in the church, even though these opinions may not be actually 'heretical.' " Whether, however, one takes "heiretikos" as "factionous, parteisuechtig" or in the more technical sense of "heretic," it is important to note that the emphasis is on persistent refusal to heed admonition. Before this passage could be applied to our negotiations with the ALC it would have to be proved that the ALC has stubbornly, belligerently refused to submit to the teachings of God's Word. So far the ALC Commissioners have not made themselves guilty of such an attitude. To apply this passage to the present situation of our negotiations is, therefore, a gross misapplication of this word of God.

## APPLICATION OF DOCTRINAL PRINCIPLES

Agreed in the Scriptural principles of fellowship, our earnest endeavor must be that we agree also in the application of these principles.

The practice prevalent in our church, the Synodical Conference, has been and still is that we establish no church fellowship and are wary of any entangling alliances with church bodies or church groups, even though they call themselves Lutheran, that adhere to false doctrine. From its very inception, our own Synod, by the grace of God, has been aware of its koinoonia-obligation, that is, its duty to share with others, especially with those who also call themselves Lutheran, the heritage which God has given our church in all its glory and truth and purity, and our fathers were active in carrying out what the Common Confession has put into these words: "We must also be alert and susceptible to the Lord's leading to establish and maintain fellowship with those whom He has made one with us in the faith and to seek to win the erring and wayward for unity in the true faith. We are mindful of our Lord's intercessory prayer that we, who are His brethren, may be one, even as He and the Father are one." For that purpose our fathers started "Der Lutheraner" and we know what this voice of our fathers accomplished in their koinoonia-obligation. For that purpose they started "Lehre und Wehre" and we know that it was both, a periodical for the teaching as well as the defense of the truth with the purpose in mind to gather especially the Lutherans of our country around the banner of the truth, and we also know how "Lehre und Wehre" affected the entire Lutheran world. For that purpose they instituted Free Conferences; our Missouri Synod fathers were the ones that spoke for them, urged them, and worked in them "speaking the truth in love" with the earnest purpose in mind to effect unity in doctrine and fellowship. The result was the Synodical Conference of 1872, which wrote into its constitution even then this declaration of purpose, which since the adoption of a revised constitution in 1946 now reads: "to strive for true unity in doctrine and practice among Lutheran church bodies." Again and again our Synod has asked the other synods of the Synodical Conference to join us in the execution also of this purpose of our conference, but so far in vain. We are sure that present grievances between our two synods would not exist if our brethren had joined us in this endeavor. To further unity in doctrine and practice, our fathers were also wary of entangling alliances of any kind with church bodies and church groups with whom they were not in complete doctrinal unity, lest their obedience to the Word of Christ be violated, the clearness of their trumpet be muffled and their ready opportunity for sharing be spoiled and their voice submerged and silenced. Thus our fathers fulfilled their koinoonia-obligation and shared their Lutheran heritage with the Lutherans of our country. They did this so successfully that they are being credited far and wide with having lifted American Lutheranism out of its chaos of confessional apathy. It has even been said in these latter days that the Missouri Synod has become the conscience of the Lutheran Church of the world. They accomplished this by supporting their faithful and insistent testimony as earnest and sincere by sternly refusing to

enter any kind of an alliance with any Lutheran body until unity of doctrine has been achieved.

While it is comparatively easy to utter the right principles and to apply them to church bodies, it is often quite difficult to follow these principles in individual cases and situations. To determine in a given case whether a certain act or attitude is unionistic is often fraught with much difficulty. For that reason it behooves each and every one to move slowly and to examine very carefully whether or not the application of the principles of fellowship to a given case is true and correct. Circumstances obtaining should be carefully investigated, that in every case it can be clearly and definitely demonstrated that the principles of Scripture concerning fellowship are being observed and not in the least violated. If a fellowship action or activity is not clearly and demonstrably in harmony with scriptural teaching, we must avoid it, being mindful that an action for which we cannot show a clear call of God will fall under the sentence of Luther: "Und wenn du mit einer Predigt koenntest die ganze Welt selig machen und hast den Befehl nicht, so lasz es nur anstehen, denn du wirst den rechten Sabbath brechen und wird Gott nicht gefallen." St. L. III, p. 1090, par. 166.

Since we are all agreed on the principles of Scripture governing the point of fellowship and unionism, and since it is often difficult to judge a particular case of application of these principles or difficult to determine the circumstances that obtain in a case, brotherly love certainly demands that judgment in a certain application of these fellowship principles be withheld until all the facts have been ascertained and that, if someone believes that these principles have been violated, this someone should in the spirit of meekness and brotherly love discuss and settle the matter with the supposed offender according to Matthew 18. If the principle of fellowship has been violated and the contention must be upheld, the best and most brotherly way of correction may be along the line of the fatherly advice given in a similar case by an older pastor of our church to a younger brother: "Nicht wieder tun ist die beste Busze." Brotherly love will not always insist upon the last pound, but "rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," and according to Gal. 6:1 will consider himself and bear in mind how easy it is at times to fall into a wrong decision. While a false doctrine, propounded and advocated and defended, may have to be publicly recanted, this may not at all be necessary in an application of a doctrine where without malice or prejudice a wrong decision in judgment was made. Least of all should a case of this kind be shouted from the housetops.

A brotherly duty, however, is also to be performed for a brother who is being unwarrantedly and unmercifully and publicly pilloried and accused of unionism, which at first blush may seem apparent, but upon closer investigation is not so evident at all. In a case where a violation of Scriptural principles cannot be clearly and definitely demonstrated, the entire matter may have to be left to the respective person's own conscience according to the word of the apostle: "With me it is a very

small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: . . . but He that judgeth me is the Lord," 1 Cor. 4:3,4; and: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth," Rom. 14:4. — On the other hand, however, it must also be stated that a supposed offender should by no means resent it if he is called upon to answer for, and give an account of, his action. He should be happy to do it and to assure and convince his brethren that he is perfectly joined together with them in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Let me close with a quotation from an article written by Dr. Arndt in CTM 12 (1941), 470: "The right course is not always easily discerned . . . But wherever there is a spirit of holy awe when God has spoken, where there is the sincere desire to remain faithful to everything that the Holy Scriptures inculcate, the right balance, even when momentarily lost through human weakness, will always be regained, and a Scriptural course will again be followed." May God grant it. Amen.

February, 1954

# PRAYER FELLOWSHIP or JOINT PRAYER

There is, I believe, full agreement among us in the principles underlying church fellowship. We together fully subscribe to this declaration of the "Brief Statement": "We repudiate unionism, that is church fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine, as disobedience to God's command, as causing divisions in the Church, Romans 16:17; 2 John 9,10, and as involving the constant danger of losing the Word of God entirely, 2 Tim. 2:17-21." Also the Common Confession, Part I, is not silent on the question of church fellowship. It declares: "It is the duty of the Church to be faithful to its Lord and His Word in all its testimony, to be steadfast in its confession of His truth at all times, and to avoid and combat error. It is the duty of the Church to mold and keep its practice in conformity with the Lord's directives in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore we dare not condone error or have altar-and pulpit-fellowship and unscriptural cooperation with erring individuals, church bodies, or church groups that refuse to be corrected by God's Word." The Wisconsin Synod has declared concerning this statement on church fellowship in the "Common Confession": "Except for the lack of definition of 'unscriptural cooperation' and the absence of any reference to the question of prayer fellowship, we find ourselves in wholehearted agreement with the principles in themselves," Wis. Proc. 1951: p. 134.

The "Common Confession" might have added the word "prayer fellowship" to altar-and pulpit-fellowship; for prayer fellowship is indeed a part of church fellowship. A cardinal text of Scripture defining church fellowship is Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." This passage speaks of the life of the Church or congregation at Jerusalem. It contains all the essentials of church fellowship, fellowship in doctrine and in worship and work (pulpit fellowship), fellowship in the breaking of bread (altar fellowship), and fellowship in prayer (prayer fellowship). One part is as important as the other in the question of church fellowship and must not be ignored or disconnected from the other. However, while pulpit-and altar-fellowship are always prayer fellowship or fellowship in prayer is not always an exercise of church fellowship.

When speaking of the Church in the concept of church fellowship, we refer to the local congregation, which is the primary and the only divinely ordained organizational unit of the Church, consisting of the two or three, the two or three hundred, the two or three thousand gathered together in the name of Jesus for the public administration of the Office of the Keys, Matt. 18:20; Acts 1:12-26; 15:4,41; 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2, etc.

When these individual congregations unite into larger organizations, they do not give up their identity, or delegate functions; they retain their identity as primary organizations of the church, and they have fellowship with one another as together they continue "in the apostles' doctrine and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayer." It is a fellowship of worship and work.

This we call church fellowship and it is expressed in pulpit- altar- and prayer-fellowship. It centers in the Office of the Keys, the public administration of the Office of the Keys, as the local congregation exercises its God-given and Christ-appointed power to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments.

Certain of these functions, such as training men for the ministry and sending them out into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, the local congregation has promised to carry out jointly with its sister-congregations in synodia, that is, the company, the fellowship, called synod. The local congregation does not really delegate powers, but merely joins hands with sister-congregations in carrying out its own divinely-appointed mission. And inasmuch as in these functions Synod actually carries out the functions of the local congregations or the local congregation's administration of the Office of the Keys, Synod is more than a mere "Zweckverband" or association for purpose; it is also a church, and what is said of church fellowship pertains also to synod.

Speaking of church fellowship, then, we have reference to the relation of congregations to congregations or of synods to synods, and not at all to a relationship of individuals to individuals in the churches. When one congregation worships with another, or transfers its members to another or exchanges pulpits with one another or partakes of one another's altar; when synods engage in joint church work, join in missionary and educational endeavors, recognize one another's ministers and ministerial candidates; this is a manifestation of church fellowship which, according to Scripture, must be based upon unity of doctrine. It is expressed by pulpit-altar-and prayer-fellowship.

Altar fellowship is always an act of church fellowship and a part of congregational life because the Lord's Supper is always an exercise of the public administration of the Office of the Keys given to the local congregation. The well-known passages of 1 Cor. 10:16,17; 11:18-29 prove that Holy Communion is always a congregational activity and never the private affair of an individual Christian or private Christian gatherings. An individual Christian alone does not celebrate the Lord's Supper. This privilege is normally not exercised in a private gathering of Christians, a family gathering or any other private gathering of Christians. According to Scripture, Holy Communion is always a congregational affair, a celebration of the many who come together by the Lord's Supper not only to be assured of their salvation, not only for the strengthening of faith and furtherance in holiness of living, but also "in testimony of the communion of faith." Therefore the apostle demands of the Corinthians that divisions and heresies be removed from among them if they wish to celebrate the Lord's Supper God-pleasingly.



The same is true of pulpit fellowship. Pulpit fellowship is not the occasional preaching of a pastor in a heterodox church. The essence of pulpit fellowship is the mutual exchange of pulpits as an expression of unity, of fellowship in doctrine, teaching and preaching. The pulpit is mutually given to brother pastors in whom full confidence is had that he will feed the Church of God entrusted to the brother pastor's care with the pure food of sound doctrine. That is church fellowship expressed by pulpit fellowship. Yet, not every appearance in the pulpit of another denomination constitutes an acknowledgment of church fellowship. It depends upon the purpose of the service and the understanding of the difference that exists. Yet, I cannot reciprocate and permit the heterodox to occupy my pulpit. It cannot be a mutual exchange of pulpits. Pulpit-fellowship is always an expression of church-fellowship.

And whenever in our public congregational or synodical life we practice prayer fellowship, such prayer fellowship is very evidently on a level with altar- and pulpit-fellowship and is, therefore, also an exercise of church fellowship.

However, as before stated, while pulpit- and altar-fellowship are always, prayer-fellowship is not always an exercise of church fellowship. Prayer is not always a function of the public administration of the Office of the Keys given to all local congregations; it is often the private activity of Christians outside of congregational or church life, the activity of individual Christians in their private personal lives or in private gatherings or even private formal meetings. Such private prayers have been called joint prayers to distinguish them from prayer fellowship in exercise of church fellowship. The terms prayer fellowship and joint prayer have been, can be, and may be used synonymously; for either situation either term may be employed if correctly understood. We must, however, keep in mind that there is a difference between prayer fellowship or joint prayer as an exercise of church fellowship and prayer fellowship or joint prayer in our dealings with individual fellow-Christians in our private personal lives. In other words, there is a prayer fellowship or joint prayer as it applies within the bonds of church fellowship and as it applies to situations outside of church fellowship.

If now someone wishes to term the one situation prayer fellowship (exercise of church fellowship) and the other situation joint prayer (prayers outside of church fellowship), he certainly has a right to do so. When, therefore, the 1944 resolution of our Synod states, on the one hand, that "no pulpit, altar, or prayer fellowship has been established between us and the American Lutheran Church" and, on the other hand, declares that "joint prayer in intersynodical conferences . . . does not militate against the resolution of the Fort Wayne convention" (p. 257), it chose the term prayer fellowship for joint prayer as an exercise of church fellowship and the term joint prayer for prayer fellowship outside of the bonds of church fellowship. Not more than that is involved in the resolution of Synod.

When Christians act as individuals, outside of the congregational life, in their private life, in their family life, in their social life, etc., they have the privilege to

pray. Prayers, joint prayers as a private exercise of Christians are often spoken of in the Bible, Ps. 10:17; 19:14; 50:15; Matt. 6:6-13; 7:7-11; Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:17; Mark 11:24; Phil. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:8; John 4:21-23. Their prayer in such instances, even though several join in prayer, as for instance in family devotions, in private meetings, formal or informal, at the bedside, in danger, is not an expression or exercise of church fellowship, confessional fellowship, though it is in deed and in truth an expression of a joint personal faith in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Prayer under such circumstances involves no confession of denominational tenets and bears purely and simply and only a devotional character. If such private joint prayers should include members of heterodox churches, we are not at all dealing with them as members of another church, within the realm or sphere of their particular denomination; we could not worship with them in their church. We are dealing with them as individual Christians, of whom we may assume (and this point is important) that membership in a heterodox church is held by them not wilfully and stubbornly (thereby they would reveal themselves as unchristians), but rather from lack of Christian knowledge and understanding. They share with us and we with them the same Lord, the same faith, the same baptism, the same God and Father of all and their membership in a heterodox church, because of a lack of knowledge on their part, is an act of a happy or unhappy inconsistency. Under these circumstances there may be joint prayer, not with their church or with them in their church and congregational life, but with them individually and privately as we meet them by chance or under special circumstances in our private personal or professional lives and are occasioned by prevailing circumstances to join in prayer. If such contact, however, should continue for any length of time, it is but natural that in a spirit of love and with patience, much patience perhaps, we will point out to them the wrong and danger of their membership in a heterodox church, but we will bear with them as long as we may assume that their membership is held in weakness of Christian knowledge. If, however, in our extended contact with a certain individual (or group) he should manifest himself to be for his own person an adherent to false doctrine, a contender for error and disturber of the peace by which we are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit, a causer of divisions and offenses, our attitude must change; we must withdraw from him in a religious way and thus decline to become a partaker of his evil behavior.

The prayer of people acting as individuals, also joint prayer, is always private prayer as distinguished from public or congregational prayer or prayer "von Gemeinschaftswegen." That is also the case at intersynodical conferences, where we meet with individual members of other synods, meet not condoning error but in the spirit of willing obedience to the Word of God, in order, with the help of God's Spirit through the Word, to remove divisions and offenses that exist, so that these individuals may then go back to their church, their fellowship, and help them remove divisions and offenses from among their congregations or fellowship. They are private prayers in the peculiar church-adopted sense of the

word as distinguished from public or congregational or because-of-the-fellowship or "von Gemeinschaftswegen."

This entire matter of joint prayer in a Christian's private life was the subject of an essay written by Dr. Hamann of our Australian sister synod and published in the Australasian Theological Review of 1940, of which I wish to quote the following paragraphs:

"When a person joins a congregation, or goes to church, or receives Holy Communion, or has a child baptized, he is carrying out what he conceives to be religious duties, or is at any rate performing actions possessing a definitely religious significance. But people go to many places, attend various functions, meet their fellows in hundreds or thousands of situations and circumstances without being actuated primarily by religious motives or without any religious considerations at all. If in these circumstances the religious element or factor is somehow injected or is somehow present, the question of whether or not we have a case of unionism is not nearly so simple as some seem to think. Certainly the Christian always and everywhere is bound to confess the truth; never and nowhere dare he strike a compromise with error. But the question is just this: Do such situations imply a compromise with error or a denial of the truth, or do they not?"

"I must begin by saying that a mechanical and automatic application of words like 'Depart from them,' 'Avoid them,' 'Do not receive him,' seems to me inadequate and out of place. These and other Scripture words of like tenor do help to establish the great Scripture principles which we have treated as axiomatic, and upon which we have based our argument so far: I mean the great principles that only the pure doctrine of God's Word has the right of existence in the Church; that all error and false teaching is sin and must be rejected; that the Church has the duty of confessing the truth and of condemning error. But the unthinking, indiscriminate application of such injunction as 'Avoid them,' etc., to every Christian who is not a member of the orthodox church, in order to show what is and what is not unionism, seems to me inconclusive and, in the good sense of the term, uncritical. The ease, the fatal facility with which such a thing can be done, carries us away. But surely sound exegetical principles demand — and that means that sound Lutheran principles demand — that we carefully examine both the text and the context, and that we then with equal care seek to determine when, where, and to what extent such injunctions are applicable to the religious life of our times.

"For one thing, by far the most of these texts are aimed at false teachers; usually at wicked ones; usually at those who subvert the Gospel of Christ. Then again, the entire milieu, all the conditions and circumstances, the whole background — all that is quite different in our days from what it was in the times of the Apostles. There were false teachers in the early Church, as there are now. But there were not in St. Paul's day large bodies of Christians sharing the same belief to a very large extent, nor bodies of Lutherans with members the rank and file of whom believe practically the selfsame doctrines, although their leaders — it is a fact that the

existing doctrinal differences are argued mainly by the leaders, the pastors — though their leaders differ on certain teachings. We shall not depart by a single hair's breadth from the principles before enunciated; but the question now is not: 'What is to be our attitude over against false teachers?' but: 'What constitutes unionism in the private lives of our Christians? And how far are injunctions like "Avoid them" applicable to Mr. Smith and Mr. Brown next door?' When St. Paul warned his readers against Judaizing teachers and other false teachers, and added the words: 'Depart from such,' they knew what he meant, viz., 'Do not be carried away by their error; do not let them mislead you; do not join them; do not link up with them.' That surely is the essence of his warning; and that remains valid for all times, as regards all errorists. But that one of our members who, by force of circumstances, finds himself together at prayer with a member of the United Ev. Lutheran Church of Australia, let us say, is guilty of unionism because St. Paul writes of certain teachers: 'Avoid them' — that has to be proved. That, to me, is a case of non sequitur.

"We said that most of the texts usually cited in this connection warn against false teachers who deny the very Gospel of Christ and against men of wicked, evil, dissolute life. No objection can be raised against extending the warning here given to all false teachers, including those whose error is comparatively slight; for it is Scripture teaching that all doctrine in the Church is to agree with Holy Writ, and that all merely human teachings and opinions are to be shunned. I do not see, however, that such passages help us to determine what our conduct must be in certain contacts with people belonging to heterodox communities — people who are not teachers at all, who are not at all trying to seduce us, and whose views we do not for a moment propose to share. The injunction to avoid them might still be urged as a warning not to be entangled in the error which their Church teaches and confesses. But with regard to the question: 'What is unionism in the private life of a Christian?' they seem to me to be irrelevant.

"I shall tentatively answer the question which forms the heading of this part of the essay thus: There can be no question of unionism where the presumption of unwarranted church fellowship or religious fellowship, or the presumption of the denial or compromise of the truth, or the presumption of the toleration of error, cannot in reason and in fairness arise." A.T.R., July to September, 1940.

## PRAYER AT INTERSYNODICAL CONFERENCES

However, let us go on to speak of prayers at intersynodical conferences, concerning which our Synod in 1944 passed the following resolution: "Joint prayer at intersynodical conferences, asking God for guidance and blessing upon the deliberations and discussions of His Word, does not militate against the resolution of the Fort Wayne Convention ('that in the meantime it be understood that no pulpit-, altar-, or prayer-fellowship has been established between us and the

American Lutheran Church; and until such fellowship has been officially declared by the synods concerned, no action is to be taken by any of our pastors or congregations which ignores the fact that we are not yet united.'), provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error. Local conditions will determine the advisability of such prayer. Above all, the conscience of a brother must not be violated nor offense given." Proc. 1944, 251.252. I shall, first of all, give a brief historical review of the practice observed in our church and then again let Dr. Hamann speak to us through an excerpt from a paper on "Prayerfellowship" which he read at the convention of our sister-synod in Australia. The theses and parts of this essay appeared in the Concordia Theological Monthly of 1950.

At intersynodical conferences we meet with those who come to us and we to them for the purpose of establishing an agreement in the teachings of God's Word. We take for granted that they are sincere Christians and lovers of the truth of God and not only ready but anxious to bow in believing obedience to the teachings of Scripture. They may in the past have failed to do that and still be failing because of weakness in knowledge and having followed unwittingly such as were causers (poiontas) of divisions and offenses spoken of in Romans 16. They may themselves have been such, but as sure as they are Christians they were such unknowingly and unintentionally. Charity that believeth all things must prompt us to take this attitude toward them. Our avoiding them has set them a-thinking or the deplorable and God-displeasing division in the church is grieving them and creating in them and also in us the sincere desire to heal these divisions and to remove the offenses. They are no longer active to cause divisions and offenses; they are bent on healing the breach. Certainly no full religious fellowship (altar-, pulpit-, and prayer-fellowship) can be established with their church until the breach is fully healed and the fact established that divisions and offenses have been removed. We are meeting with them to help them that they may then go to their church and fellowship to heal the breach that exists between their church and ours. But now to apply the "Avoid them," "Withdraw from them," "Do not receive them" even to a private joint prayer (that is exactly what it is; not a public joint prayer, a prayer "von Gemeinschaftswegen," but a private joint prayer outside of congregational life and worship) for the Holy Spirit's guidance is going beyond text and context of these passages; it is going beyond even the letter, and most assuredly beyond the spirit of these warnings against false teachers. And to go beyond Scripture is as sinful as to fall short of it. It certainly behooves us to avoid both extremes. It behooves us to consider the circumstances that are obtaining at certain times and in certain stages of negotiations. I believe our fathers did just that and we should learn from their example.

When the first approach was sought between the Lutherans of the East and of the West, Dr. Walther and his associates took a prominent part in the proceedings. There were free conferences in which the matter of Lutheran union was discussed on the basis of the Augsburg Confession. Yet those who in the 50's met with our delegates for such conferences were far from orthodox in their position. All

free conferences held between 1856 and 1859 and in 1866 were opened with prayer. The minutes of the 1866 Buffalo colloquy are silent as to devotions and prayer. The 1867 Iowa colloquy and all succeeding sessions were opened with a liturgical service. The minutes of the Ohio colloquy in 1868, of Wisconsin Synod in 1868, of the Illinois Synod in 1869, of the Minnesota Synod in 1872 are silent as to devotions. The German-English Conference at Gravelton, Mo. (Tennessee, Holston, Missouri, and Norwegian Synods represented), held in 1872, was opened with a regular service, and several other services were held by men of the several synods represented. In 1874 Dr. Walther met with the General Council at Jamestown, New York; the meeting was opened with prayer.

But then came, in 1880, the controversy on election and conversion which lined up the Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Synod, and the Norwegian Synod on one side and Ohio, Iowa, and the United Norwegian Church on the other. The debate was conducted with great bitterness. Deeply cutting accusations were raised. The spirit prevailing in these discussions differed markedly from the colloquies of an earlier period conducted with other Lutheran churches. From a description given by Dr. Bente in his article in L & W 1905 it is evident that the delegates were fighting for their own cause rather than for the truth of Holy Scripture. To that extent the controversy had deteriorated through the years. A few excerpts from Dr. Bente's article will show this.

What was Iowa's attitude toward Missouri? Bente writes: "Wie ungereimt und unhaltbar aber selbst vor dem Forum der menschlichen Vernunft die Stellung der Iowaer in diesem ganzen Handel ist, geht hervor aus folgenden Tatsachen:

1. In ihrem 'Kirchenblatt' vom 23. Juli vorigen Jahres stellen die Iowaer das Prinzip auf, 'dass man mit solchen, die klare Lehren der Schrift beharrlich leugnen, keine Kirchengemeinschaft pflegen duerfe.'

2. Dieselben Iowaer haben nun Missouri fuenfzig Jahre lang bekaempft und ein Viertel jahrhundert lang in aller Welt als Calvinisten verschrieen, dazu wiederholt erklaert, dass die missourische Lehre von der Gnadenwahl kirchentrennend sei, und noch im vorigen Jahre hat das iowaische 'Kirchenblatt' die lutherische Kirche im Osten aufgefordert, in den Streit wider Missouri einzutreten, weil es sich 'in diesen Kaempfen, die laengst grundsatzlichen Character angenommen haben, um nichts Geringeres handelt als um die Erhaltung der historischen lutherischen Kirche, die in Gefahr steht, von der Synodalkonferenz zur Sekte gemacht zu werden.' (L.u.W. 50.275.370).

3. Eben diese Iowaer, die ihre Beschuldigungen wider die Synodalkonferenz nicht etwa zurueckgezogen haben, vielmehr an denselben festhalten, wischen sich jetzt, alsob nichts vorgefallen waere, den Mund und verlangen, dass die Missourier und die uebrigen Glieder der Synodalkonferenz mit ihnen 'gemeinsame liturgische Gottesdienste' abhalten, und beschweren sich laut und bitter vor der ganzen Christenheit darueber, dass wir uns dessen weigern!" (L.u.W. 50,370.422).

"Iowa hat Missouri fuer eine Sekte erklart, und Ohio hat uns ebenfalls mit dem Titel gedroht. Wiederholt betont Dr. Loy im Columbus Theological Magazine des vorigen Jahres, dasz die Synodalkonferenz, wenn sie bei ihrer Stellung bleibe, betrachtet werden muesse 'as a sect among other sects' (S.129), 'a recognized portion of the Calvinistic Reformed Church, or a separate predestination sect' (133), 'as a Calvinistic sect' (138)," p.97, footnote.

What was Ohio's attitude toward Missouri? ". . . und den Missouriern, von denen sie sich als von groben und gefaehrlichen Irrlehrern vor 25 Jahren getrennt und gegen die sie nun 25 Jahre lang ununterbrochen die Anklage des Calvinismus erhoben haben und die sie jetzt noch in fast jeder Nummer ihrer Zeitschriften als gefaehrliche und hartnaeckige Irrlehrer bekaempfen."

Bente in this article is speaking of joint prayer with the "Wortfuehrern" of the Ohioans and Iowans, of "Gebetsgemeinschaft mit Stellhorn, Allwardt, Schmidt, etc." p. 104, who were continually denouncing the Missourians "even now yet in almost every number of their periodicals as dangerous and stubborn errorists."

The people with whom they were meeting were such as are described by Bente in the following words: "Die Iowae und Ohioer haben sich von Missouri losgesagt, Iowa vor fuenfzig und Ohio vor fuenfundzwanzig Jahren, um die goettlichen Wahrheiten, welche Missouri vertrat, zu bekaempfen, sich um ihre Irrtuemer zu schaaren und diesen in der lutherischen Kirche zum Siege zu verhelfen. Die Wahrheit ist ihnen aus Gottes Wort und dem lutherischen Bekenntnis bezeugt und vorgehalten worden, nicht einmal oder zweimal, sondern wohl mehr als hundertmal. Aber sie haben alle Belehrung beharrlich abgewiesen und bis auf den heutigen Tag die Wahrheit bitter und ununterbrochen bekaempft. Ja, die goettlichen Wahrheiten von der Bekehrung und Gnadenwahl haben sie verlaestert als calvinistische Irrlehren und die Verfechter dieser Wahrheiten gebrandmarkt als Calvinisten, Irrlehrer, Sectierer, Woelfe und Teufelsapostel. Sie haben die Sturmglocken gelaetet und den Kampf wider die Wahrheit geschuert und auch nicht das Mittel der Verleumdung gescheut, um die Wahrheit zu unterdruecken und die Irrlehre zu verbreiten. Nein, als Schwache, die nur irren, weil ihnen die goettliche Wahrheit noch nicht klar unter die Augen getreten waere, koennen wir diese unsere alten Gegner nicht ansehen. Ihnen koennen wir darum zwar die goettliche Wahrheit immer von Neuem bezeugen, schriftlich wie muendlich, aber Kirchen- und Gebetsgemeinschaft koennen wir mit ihnen nicht pflegen."

If this bitter and fanatic opposition against the truth had not characterized these "our old opponents," I am sure that Bente would have had a different attitude, which is evidenced in the words which he adds to the foregoing: "Und wenn sich, wie das gewisz der Fall ist, unter den Iowae und Ohioern, ihren Predigern wie Laien, viele befinden, denen die goettliche Wahrheit, welche die Synodalkonferenz vertritt, noch nicht klar unter die Augen getreten ist, so wuerden wir uns diesen wirklich Schwachen gerne bruederlich (our emphasis) naehern, aber so lange sie ihren Fuehrern folgen und sich mit denselben identifizieren, machen sie es uns

unmoeglich, weiter zu gehen, als auch ihnen durch Schrift und Wort die Wahrheit zu bezeugen. Zugleich bekennen wir aber gerne, dasz gerade das Verlangen, diesen Schwachen unter unsern Gegnern naeher zu kommen, uns vornehmlich bewogen hat, auf den freien Konferenzen vertreten zu sein."

Bente evidently declines to renounce "jede Glaubens- und Gebetsgemeinschaft" with such as "aus Schwachheit oder Mangel an Einsicht irren," p. 98; and Bente is writing these words with reference to members of the other synods.

Now, this article of Bente has become the "proof" for many for their stand against opening any and all intersynodical conferences under any and all circumstances with prayer. However, it certainly is most unfair to make such a general application of an article which was written on the background of a very special situation that obtained at the time of the Detroit meeting. I can well understand why our fathers at that time refused to join in prayer with the delegates to the Detroit conference; I wonder if under those circumstances they should have met at all. According to my opinion, it was not the existing difference in doctrine which caused our fathers at that time to refuse to pray with them. These differences had existed also in the earlier decades and they joined in prayer. The real cause was the bitterness that had entered the discussions, in which battle-lines were drawn and opinions of dealing with "dangerous and stubborn errorists" had become settled. That is why our fathers at the time changed their practice concerning opening these intersynodical meetings with prayer.

Conditions can change. By the grace of God conditions did change. A new generation grew up; yea, a second and third generation, far removed from the old controversies and the hateful attitudes. New amalgamations were formed; and anew the divisions in Lutheranism in America became a matter of deep concern, anxious and godly concern on the part of many that these divisions be healed. Shall we now demand that these children and grand-children must do penance for the hateful conduct of their forbears? Or shall we meet them in the selfsame spirit of "charity believeth all things" in which our fathers of earlier years were able to meet the representatives of other Lutheran synods? Brethren, I am sure that attitudes in your synod as well as in ours should take these things into consideration. This difference in application of a Scriptural principle on which we stand united should certainly not become a cause for separation — it dare not lest schism, a separation which is not commanded by God, be committed; it should rather induce us to further brotherly study. By all means, let us beware lest our negotiations deteriorate to the level of bitterness that marked the election controversy at the turn of the century.

In conclusion, let me now read to you what Dr. Hamann writes in his synodical convention essay on the subject of prayer at intersynodical conferences:

"But let us, without multiplying cases, come to the question that is perhaps uppermost in the minds of all of us: Can or must joint prayer at the intersynodical meetings now being held for the discussion of doctrinal differences and the establishment of full doctrinal agreement, be regarded as unionistic prayer, as an instance



of sinful prayer fellowship? The only test that will lead us to a reliable judgment, based ultimately upon Scripture itself, is the test which we have consistently applied in this paper. Does prayer at intersynodical meetings — joint prayer — imply the sacrificing or denial of Biblical truth? Does it involve making common cause with error? In other words, does it show the characteristic marks of unionism — the features that make unionism sinful? In setting forth his conviction that the features or marks of unionism are excluded by the very nature, character, and purpose of the meeting now under consideration, the essayist can but repeat what he said publicly elsewhere. These meetings are arranged and held, not to disregard, ignore, or compromise the truth revealed in the Word of God, but to arrive at a common understanding and confession of that truth; not to hide, gloss over, or minimize error, but to arrive at a common understanding of what is to be avoided and denounced as doctrinal or practical error; not to ignore and obscure existing differences, but to examine these differences in the light of Holy Writ and to remove them; not blandly to decree a nonexistent unity or pretend to establish it by some meaningless formula of the give-and-take variety, but to bring about complete doctrinal unity and harmony on the basis of God's Word by scrutinizing these differences closely in the clear light of the Holy Bible. Not unionism, but anti-unionism in its clearest, strongest, most positive and unmistakable form is the general characteristic of our intersynodical discussions. The entire procedure is a continued outspoken condemnation of unionism and unwarranted church fellowship. This being so, one does not see how a simple prayer for divine guidance as well as for love of the truth and for charity, when spoken at such meetings, can in any proper sense of the term be called unionistic. For the marks of unionism are conspicuously absent. — The argument that such prayers are always necessarily contradictory, one side praying against the other, and hence displeasing to God, is so doubtful as to be valueless. We pray constantly to be guided into all truth, and to be preserved from error, even while we are sure of having the truth. Hence a prayer for God's blessing upon the discussions does not at all mean that each side necessarily prays against the other. The argument that we are anticipating church fellowship by joint prayer at synodical meetings may be met by a flat denial. We are not anticipating church fellowship by such prayers, for we are not practicing church fellowship by such prayers. Joint prayer upon occasion cannot be regarded as an effort to establish fellowship by that very act of prayer; still less can it be looked upon as being in itself an act of church fellowship. To pray jointly for God's aid and blessing signifies no more than that here are Christians — Lutherans in our case — who are deeply and prayerfully concerned about reaching full harmony, agreement, and unity on the basis of God's Word. Not a man present would suppose that, by the act of prayer, this purpose had already been accomplished and further effort rendered unnecessary. Such prayers have not accomplished, as they were not meant to accomplish in and by themselves, the establishment of that permanent relationship which we call church fellowship. Hence, in the absence of those elements

which constitute unionism, we cannot regard the joint prayers spoken of as sinful prayer fellowship condemned by the Scriptures." CTM. October 1950, p. 775.

I close with the prayer in our hymnal:

Preserve Thy little flock in peace,  
Nor let Thy boundless mercy cease;  
To all the world let it appear  
That Thy true Church indeed is here.

# THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY

The purpose of this paper is to examine whether the military chaplaincy, distinctive as it is in form and opportunity, is a field of service which a Lutheran pastor may properly enter without compromising the Scriptural principles which govern a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and also without violating the Scriptural principal of separation of Church and State. We believe that both principles are kept fully inviolate and uncompromised in the chaplaincy setup of our military and that therefore a Lutheran pastor may serve in the military chaplaincy with a good conscience and that the Church will find in the military an opportunity for preaching the Gospel which it should not hesitate to enter.

Our military chaplains are functioning in a dual capacity. They are, on the one hand, appointed by the government to promote religion and morality in the Armed Forces; and, on the other hand, they are called by the Church to administer the Office of the Keys in behalf of the local congregations for the spiritual care of its sons and daughters in the military service and by the preaching of the Gospel to reach out to others in conformity to St. Paul's example, who says: "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some," 1 Cor. 9:22.

## ***1. The government commissions the chaplains called and endorsed by the respective church bodies to promote religion and morality in the Armed Forces.***

The government has a tremendous interest, and also a tremendous stake, in the morals and the morale of its military. It recognizes the peculiar influence and value of religion for the morals and morale of military personnel. It knows full well that, if the morals and morale of its fighting men are high, that can only redound to the benefit and welfare of government. Hence it is willing to do everything in its power to effect this benefit and to pay as generously for this service as it does for other services. And knowing what influence religion has in the achievement of this aim, it is but natural that the government should turn to the churches to acquire and secure this service for its service personnel. The government requires that chaplains "will strive to promote religion, morality, patriotism, good morale, and the principles of the character guidance program, and will cooperate fully with commanders in the accomplishment of this purpose." Army Regulations No. 660-10, Department of the Army, 7 Dec. 1951. "The chaplain is morally obligated to provide for the religious needs of the entire command . . . to try to provide for all members of the command the opportunities to receive the ministrations of their denominations in such ways and on such occasions as the denominations of which they are members require. The chaplain accomplishes this objective through his own personal services and through the cooperative efforts of others. To that

end he enlists the active aid and cooperation of chaplains, civilian clergymen (including auxiliary chaplains) and other qualified military and civilian personnel, both lay and clerical. As the need warrants, he assists members of their denominations —

- a) in securing clergymen and providing times and places for, and public announcement of, their services; or
- b) by making arrangements for their participation in services conducted in other units or in neighboring civilian communities." AR 660-10.

The government is not thereby taking over the work of the Church. In fact, the government is not interested in the real core and center and the one aim and purpose of all true church work and that is to bring people to heaven, which can be accomplished solely by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. The government is interested only in adding greater efficiency to those engaged in the military defense of the country. "Religion to them has no aim beyond this life and when they speak of spiritual administrations and religious guidance, they speak not of the soul as we understand the term, but of the spirit, the non-corporeal side of man as distinct from the body. The government is not interested in the question whether a single person in the military or naval service of the country goes to heaven. Neither is the government interested in the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as seen from the fact that not only Christians but also Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Jews, and Universalists are eligible for the position of chaplains." Graebner, p. 8. Again Graebner writes: "The government does NOT make it the duty of the chaplain to preach the Word, to administer the sacraments and do the work of a minister of the Gospel; the government does not care whether a chaplain preaches the Word of God or not, whether he administers Baptism or Communion or not, and whether he preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ or not as is plainly seen by the fact that Jews, Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Adventists, and Universalists are eligible for the office of the chaplain and none of them believes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ." "As far as the government is concerned you could believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God or you may consider Him an imposter; and that is not wrong for the government. We do not want the government to favor any religion because where there is favoritism toward one there will be persecution of another," Graebner, p. 12. The government does not call the chaplain; it appoints him as it does any other officer of the military; it pays him not for doing what we call church work, but for the service rendered "to promote religion, morality, patriotism, good morale and the principles of the character guidance program."

## ***II. These chaplains, commissioned by the government to do the government-prescribed work, are called by the Church as pastors.***

They are to do pastoral service to our own men and preach the Gospel to all whom they can reach in their evangelistic and missionary endeavors and are by the

Church furnished with everything they need for this purpose without interference on the part of the powers that be in a conscientious administration of their office and without a penny of support by the government for their real church work, thus fully safeguarding the Scriptural principle of separation of Church and State.

Also the government recognizes this part of the chaplain's position. The Military Regulations and Directives of the Army have this to say on this point: "The chaplain's spiritual authority to teach and to preach in public, to conduct religious services, to perform ecclesiastical rites and to administer sacraments and ordinances is imparted in the ordination that his denomination has given him. The ritual and rules of his denomination are consequently his guides in these matters." Again: "Each chaplain conducts such services and rites as his denomination requires." AR 660-20.

The Air Force Manual (released Feb. 15, 1954) 165-3:

"No chaplain is required to conduct any service or rite contrary to the regulations of his own denomination."

"No chaplain is required to officiate jointly in a religious service with a chaplain or civilian clergyman of another denomination."

"The chaplain's spiritual authority to teach and to preach in public, to conduct religious services, to perform ecclesiastical rites and to administer sacraments and ordinances is imparted in the ordination that his denomination has given him. The ritual and rules of his denomination are consequently his guides in these matters."

The Chaplain's Manual, Navy Personnel (1952)

"2301. The Chaplain as a Clergyman. The chaplain is in the Navy as a clergyman of his particular religious faith, and the Navy expects him to continue his ministry and religious stewardship in the spirit and tenets of the church in which he is ordained.

"4602. "Closed" and "open" communion. The Navy Department allows chaplains perfect freedom of conscience with respect to the matter of "closed" or "open" communion. In order to meet the religious needs of officers and men, it is expected that the chaplain will provide opportunity for them to partake of communion or, when this ministry is limited either by the chaplain's own conscience, the regulations of his church, or by the custom or conscience of officers and men, he will exercise every effort to arrange for the service of communion to be conducted by chaplains or civilian clergymen of other faiths."

Our military chaplains are called by the Church, not by the government, which has no right to call or ordain ministers. "This call comes from the whole Church, in our case the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and is extended through the Armed Services Commission of our Synod which like our mission or electoral boards is authorized to extend calls. By way of information it may be stated here that calls into the chaplaincy are extended to pastors in the field as well as to seminary

graduates through the Board of Assignments after they have been given a fairly thorough acquaintance with this specialized ministry." From an essay "The Military Chaplaincy" written by Prof. O. E. Sohn, Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

In the following we shall let Professor Sohn speak, who for many years was a member of our Armed Services Commission and is, therefore, intimately acquainted also with the work of our chaplains. We are quoting Prof. Sohn from the aforementioned essay on "The Military Chaplaincy."

## **"CHAPLAINS ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD, CHURCH, AND CONSCIENCE**

" . . . Military chaplains have complete freedom, freedom of conscience and speech, that is, that they are in no wise compelled to say or do anything that would conflict with Bible, Church, or conscience. There are several points to be noted here. We might have misgivings about the statement found in military regulations that the commanding officer is responsible for the spiritual welfare and the religious program of his command. It reads: 'Commanders are responsible for the religious life, morals, and morale of their commands, and for the efficiency of chaplains under their command. It is the duty of commanders to exercise active supervision of the chaplains under their command without trespassing upon the ecclesiastical field.' (A. R. 660-20, p.4) A little reflection will make it clear that the intent of this directive is not that the C. O. should serve in the capacity of a chaplain, but that he should see to it that all the personnel under his jurisdiction receives adequate religious ministrations so far as it is possible to provide them. Assuredly, no commanding officer is authorized to foist his religious convictions on anybody. The chaplain is free to serve as he sees fit.

## **"HOW CHAPLAINS PROVIDE FOR THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS**

"There is another aspect to this situation. The government does not distinguish between the various religions, but grants appointment to qualified ministers of all denominations, provided they are properly endorsed. Nor does it favor one religion above the other, but treats them all alike. Indeed, if there are sufficient men of one faith who desire a service after their own fashion, but do not have a chaplain of their denomination available, other chaplains are required, if at all possible, to provide such services. Not as though they would be required to preach and minister to Jews according to the Torah and the Talmud, or to Roman Catholics according to their anti-christian tenets, but they would seek to enlist the services of a chaplain or a minister, priest, or rabbi from a nearby community who is of the same faith as

such a group. Those people are entitled to such consideration. Would it be wrong to accommodate them and make such services available? Would we object if a friendly Roman Catholic or Jewish or Christian Science chaplain saw to it that our Lutheran men were properly provided for? Certainly there is no denial or unionism implied in rendering such service. To make heterodox services available to the heterodox is not the same as giving them personal approval. The very fact that a chaplain refuses to officiate in such capacity and enlists the service of another chaplain or civilian pastor is evidence enough that he does not approve of them. It can hardly be said that he is making himself a partaker of other men's sins. . . .

## **"HOW GENERAL PROTESTANT SERVICES ARE CONDUCTED**

"But what about the church services which are conducted by our chaplains? Can a Lutheran chaplain officiate with a good conscience in a so-called General Protestant service? Is not that a denial of his office? Not at all, at least not necessarily so. In the first place, he has complete charge of the entire service and is in no wise obligated to serve together with chaplains of other denominations. It is expressly provided in the regulations that he is to perform his ministry in conformity with the tenets of his denomination. That means, for one thing, that he establishes his own order of service, selects his own lessons, prayers, and hymns, just like any missionary beginning work in a new field. He does not administer Holy Communion in these services, because they are not services of a Lutheran congregation. He does not distribute the Sacrament except to such whom he considers qualified according to our accepted principles. However, if there are sufficient Lutheran men in his unit who desire Lutheran services with Holy Communion, he is privileged and happy to arrange such services and will then administer the sacrament to those who produce a guest card properly signed by their home pastor or have otherwise established sufficient proof of their eligibility. If it be objected that a chaplain has not the right to commune Lutheran men and women who hold active membership in the home churches and therefore do not belong to the chaplain's fold, in other words, that he is a busybody in other men's affairs, the answer is that he is doing this with the consent and blessing of the home pastors much after the pattern of *student pastors* at our larger schools of learning who have been directly called by a synodical district to provide that very type of service for our college-going Lutheran youth. He does not foist himself upon anybody, but he does gladly serve those who come to him for counsel or religious ministrations.

"If it be objected, furthermore, that other Protestants, Roman Catholics and even unchurched people may be present too, the question is: What do we do when such people attend our churches? Do we show them the door and begin the service only after they have left? Or if they ask for an interview on a pressing problem, do we refuse them? To be sure, if this took place in their home city and their own pastor

were available, we would doubtless refer them to their pastor. But if he is beyond their reach and they are in urgent need of spiritual ministrations, we would owe them such service of love, especially in a camp or on the sea, or at the front, where many dangers threaten, yea where hour by hour there is but a step between them and death?

## **"THE ECCLESIASTICAL STATUS OF A CHAPLAIN**

"Whose minister, then, is a military chaplain, and what kind of a minister is he? Let us put it this way. To bona fide communicant members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and synods affiliated with it, he by consent serves as proxy for the home pastor, as does the student pastor we have mentioned, or even the resident pastors ministering to our college and seminary students while they are away from home. To the heterodox who may attend the services he serves as preacher and counselor when they come to him for worship or guidance. In relation to unchurched and unchristian people he occupies the position of a missionary who renders whatever service may be desired and is compatible with sound Scriptural and Lutheran principles. A parish pastor renders all these services as opportunity makes possible, the military chaplain does it continuously. His purpose is not to organize a congregation — though many souls have been won for the Kingdom by our military chaplains — but to minister to souls in need of the Word, within and without the Kingdom, through the means of grace, as opportunity presents itself. It is a ministry of soul winning and soul conservation.

## **"UNIONISTIC SERVICES AND PRACTICES**

"But what about unionism? Can our chaplains carry on an unsyncretistic ministry? Does not the very religious atmosphere of a military camp or base with its great diversity of religion both of chaplains and personnel breed indifference that leads to unionistic practices? The answer is: There is much temptation and danger in that direction, and the man who would serve as ambassador of Jesus Christ in uniform needs a goodly portion of stout spine. However, that situation is not peculiar to military establishments. It is true also of the civilian ministry. All of us are at times invited, perhaps even tempted (because of the favorable or unfavorable publicity that is involved) to engage in unionistic activity, some to a greater, some to a lesser, extent, depending on the complexion of the community which we are serving. Some have yielded to the temptation, but we would not on that account forbid men to enter the parish ministry or to become successors of those who were guilty of unionism. The guilty ones, the weak-kneed, the fearful, the glamor and glory loving, who loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, will have to answer for their denial or compromise. Never will they be able to excuse their sin by saying to the Lord that their community forces them to practice thus.



"So in the military. There too the opportunities for unionistic practice are great, perhaps greater than in the civilian ministry. Minister, priest, and rabbi live together on the same base, often in close proximity, sharing the same chapel at scheduled hours, learning to know one another quite intimately. But there is no one there who could rightly and according to regulations compel a chaplain to act contrary to his convictions and the tenets of his Church. If you ask whether that has ever been tried, the answer would be yes. Some of our chaplains occasionally had trouble during World War II. There were a few over-ambitious commanding officers and senior chaplains who had grandiose ideas along unionistic lines and put pressure on individual chaplains to bring them into line. But if you ask whether such compulsion could be carried through, and that this could be done in harmony with regulations, the answer is an emphatic no. The regulations are very specific on this point, as various paragraphs in the Appendix show.

"An interesting case occurred last October. One of our navy chaplains was appointed to serve in the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md. But all was not well. Upon inquiry he learned that he would be expected to assist in mixed communion services. When he learned that he could not escape this problem, he refused the appointment and it was cancelled. Immediately thereafter the Navy Chief of Chaplains wrote to our office in Washington stating among other things: 'We of the Chaplains Division regret that it has been necessary to cancel Chaplain E's orders, but appreciate fully that, under the circumstances there was no other alternative. We cannot and will not ask a chaplain or your, or any, denomination to serve in violation of the confessions of his church or of his own conscience. Be assured this will in no wise reflect, professionally or personally, on Chaplain E, whose excellent record speaks for itself. I am confident that he will continue to render a very effective gospel ministry to the personnel of the United States Navy and Marine Corps. Your sympathy with our problems and your commendable efforts to provide the USN with the highest type of spiritual leadership is deeply appreciated.

Faithfully yours,

S. W. Salisbury, Rear Adm. CHC, USN  
Chief of Chaplains

"And so it is in other respects. Whatever official acts there are to be performed, whether Baptisms, confirmations, marriages or funerals, always the chaplain has a free hand to operate according to his convictions and the requirements of the Church which endorsed him or in which he holds membership. As for funerals in particular, he is at liberty to arrange the ceremonies as he sees fit. If it was an individual to whom he can conscientiously give a Christian, even a Lutheran funeral, he may do so. If he does not feel free to officiate, he may refer the case to another chaplain who is willing and does not find it contrary to his convictions. If it was an unbeliever, he can refer, or use a very brief strictly military interment without any indication of a Christian burial and therefore without denial of the faith. One

chaplain stated that in his unit the commanding officer made the address which was entirely on the military level. Again, no chaplain is compelled to do anything against his convictions, though as in the civilian ministry, a situation may at times be embarrassing.

## **"CONCLUSION"**

"Looking back over the services rendered by the representatives of our Church in the military during World Wars I and II and the present police action in Korea, we cannot but feel thankful and happy over the many gratifying accomplishments which have been achieved. Experience has proved the feasibility, value, and need of chaplains' services. Tongue will never be able to tell the spiritual good that came to our young men and women in the military through the instrumentality especially of those pastors who for a season gave up the comparative ease and comfort of the parish ministry to become ambassadors of Jesus Christ in uniform. Many are the souls who were received into the Kingdom of Grace and then at the end of their tour of duty directed to, and received by, local congregations and are even now active, consecrated members of such churches. Many are the souls which in times of affliction, doubt, and confusion of mind found ready counsel from the lips of such men of God who accompanied our fighting men to the battle fronts and ministered to them in that great hour of need with Word and Sacrament to give them comfort and strength against their sins together with courage to do their duty to the utmost. Many no doubt are those who never returned, but who had been prepared for the battle by these loyal servants of Jesus Christ in uniform and were thus enabled to depart this life in the faith of the Son of God and thus to appear before the great white throne washed clean in the blood of the Lamb.

"The end is not yet. Again there are thousands of our young men in the fighting forces of our country, here and in foreign lands. We cannot deny them the means of grace, we dare not refuse them when it is well within our power to help them, and that without sacrificing our Christian and Lutheran principles. The need is great indeed. Chaplain Charles I. Carpenter, Chief of Air Forces Chaplains, puts it this way:

'A great many of the young men and women who are coming into the Armed Forces are religiously illiterate. If we send them into areas of the world and into situations that will test their best moral understanding, and if we fail to do something about their moral and spiritual protection and development, then we can have as a result a national religious tragedy as well as a personal spiritual tragedy. It is a necessity that the Christian Church today recognize that it must make a definite contribution to these young men while they are in the military service not only for the purpose of producing worthwhile Christian youth in the military, but that we might hold them close to the Church so that when they return, at the

rate of a million a year, they will come back to the Church as active members; men and women who are leaders of the laity of the Christian Church of tomorrow.'

"We do not know the religious convictions behind this statement, but it is certain that we will heed it with respect to the youth from our Church which is now, and will still be, in the military service of our country. We cannot keep in touch with everyone, perhaps, but we want to maintain contact with as many as possible. The military chaplaincy offers us a splendid opportunity of reaching many whom we could not reach with the Gospel in any other way. It is our conviction that we owe them this service of love, at the same time having earnest care and being keenly aware of our responsibility not to deny or compromise, but to give a clear testimony of our faith wherever duty calls."

The chaplaincy question has been discussed in Synodical Conference circles for some years. The 1952 resolutions of the Synodical Conference stated that, while "there is a substantial basis for agreement among us in this matter" (the doctrine of "Church and Ministry"), "there is no complete agreement within the Synodical Conference when these basic concepts of the doctrine of the Church and Ministry are translated into the practical life of the Church and its Ministry," mentioning as evidence of this especially the chaplaincy question. The Synodical Conference then resolved that the chaplaincy question be referred to the faculties of the theological seminaries, acting jointly.

Certainly, when all synods of the Synodical Conference have reached full agreement on the basic principles underlying the chaplaincy question, there is no reason for severing fellowship on the ground that no agreement has as yet been reached on the application of this principle to the chaplaincy question, but every reason to continue our efforts at a God-pleasing settlement in point of such application. A severance of fellowship on the chaplaincy question would constitute a separation which God has not commanded. Romans 16:17 and similar passages do not apply; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 9:19-22 do come into consideration.

Brethren of the Wisconsin Synod, we plead with you: Think it over once more before you leap into separation!

### III. ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT WITH NLC

Concerning the "Articles of Agreement" regarding Communion in the Armed Services we repeat what was said in "A Fraternal Word" that the arrangement is designed to cover strictly exceptional cases which arise in the life of the military. The exceptional nature of these cases is made clear in paragraph 7 of the "Articles of Agreement" which reads: "Just as in our civilian life there are exceptions to the usual procedure in the administration of the Lord's Supper, thus exceptional cases arise in dealing with the men and women in the armed forces . . ."

The question has been asked: Why must articles of agreement for exceptional cases in the military be set up when no one would think of writing up such articles of agreement for similar cases in civilian life? Does not the setting up of an agreement indicate a weakening in practice? It might in civilian life, but the very opposite is the case in the military. In the military, especially in time of war when soldiers move into battle lines, exceptional cases occur quite frequently; and that fact might have a tendency to make out of exceptions a rule and thus to break down the practice of the church. The articles of agreement, however, declare that these cases in spite of frequency, are nevertheless exceptional cases and must ever be regarded as such and never be abused to break down the regular practice of the Church.

The Articles of Agreement have been abused. Some of the church papers have given interpretations to them which simply cannot be tolerated. That is unfortunate; but it cannot be laid to the charge of the articles of agreement. That such interpretations are unwarranted is evident from an editorial in the "Lutheran Herald" of the ELC. Having given full information on the agreement, the editorial continues:

"The second to be noted is that it is only the recognition by the parties to the Agreement of a need for a 'crisis ministry' which brings the document into being. Even in this 'crisis' it is only in 'exceptional situations' that the leeway provided is to be employed. In fact, chaplains and pastors are admonished in paragraph 10 to bend every effort toward 'avoiding multiplication of exceptional cases.'

" . . . . .

"It is only just and right that these matters be made and kept perfectly clear. We of the Council should be thankful that the Missouri Synod has enough confidence in us to enter into this Agreement. We are in duty bound to adhere strictly to its terms.

"On the other hand, we doubt whether it is wise or correct to hail this as a tremendous step toward closer relations between Missouri and the rest of us; nor do we believe that it is fair toward Missouri to do so. The Agreement does not mean that we now have altar fellowship with Missouri. It would be manifestly unfair to insist that, because the Missouri Synod has said 'A', she must now also say 'B'.

"The success or failure of the Agreement will depend, in the last analysis, upon the seriousness with which it is received and adhered to by those most intimately concerned with it — The Lutheran chaplains and service pastors who will be ministering to the men and women in the armed forces. We have every reason to believe that they will be conscientious and fair in their use of it."

Lutheran Herald, February 27, 1951.

It is too bad that there have been cases where this agreement has obviously been misunderstood and misused. One can readily understand that living continuously in the environs of the military will affect judgments as to a "crisis" nature where no real "crisis" exists. Where a misapplication of the Agreement has occurred, proper action was taken and our Armed Services Commission has taken steps to prevent them in the future. There may also be a difference of opinion as to the need or even advisability of entering into such an Agreement. We may say that our reason was to advise the consciences of our own men, to protect the practice of our own men against undue criticism and judgments, and to prevent, through a multiplication of exceptional cases, which are natural in war times and battle lines, a breakdown of our church's practice of close Communion.

The misinterpretation of this Agreement in Lutheran bodies not in fellowship with us is deeply deplored and definitely regretted but we also most emphatically decline the misinterpretation placed upon this agreement on the part of our sister-synod, which on that account accuses us of unionistic practice and now even threatens to sever fellowship with us. We believe that this attitude of the Wisconsin Synod is in violation of Eph. 4: 1-3. 15. We beg you, brethren of the Wisconsin Synod, to retrace your steps and stop working for a separation which we firmly believe God does not command.

"The Military Chaplaincy" by Prof. O. E. Sohn

"The Military Chaplaincy" by Dr. Martin Graebner

#### **IV. SERVICE CENTERS**

The Wisconsin Synod has raised objections to our agreement with the National Lutheran Council on the matter of Service Centers. Again the "avoid", "be ye separate", and "withdraw" passages of Scripture are employed as proof for the unscripturalness of such a cooperation in externals. We emphatically insist that this constitutes a serious misapplication and misuse of these important and earnest admonitions of Scripture. That is wrong; it is sinful. A mere reading of the articles of agreement must convince the unbiased reader that here we have a cooperation in externals, which touches church fellowship as little as the renting of another-denominational church building.

That no unionism is involved in this agreement is shown by the provision: "That the spiritual welfare work in the interest of members of the Missouri Synod be done by pastors of the Missouri Synod and the spiritual welfare work in the interest of the members of the National Lutheran Council be done by pastors of the National Lutheran Council."

February, 1954

# **COOPERATION IN EXTERNALS, UNIONISTIC(?) RELIGIOUS PROGRAMS AND CHURCH FEDERATIONS.**

## ***I. Six Questions of the Wisconsin Synod***

The Wisconsin Synod in 1949 addressed six questions to our Synod, to which our Praesidium, upon resolution of our Convention in 1950, sent answers to the Wisconsin Synod, and concerning which our Convention in 1953, because of the reaction of the Wisconsin Synod, passed the following resolution:

### **RESOLUTION 18**

1. In 1949 the Wisconsin Synod addressed a letter to our Synod in which it asked for an answer to certain questions on matters of doctrine and practice. (Missouri Synod Proceedings 1950, pp. 666, 667.)
2. Upon instruction of the 1950 convention the Praesidium of our Synod answered the questions put to our Synod in the letter of the Wisconsin Synod. (Missouri Synod Proceedings 1950, p. 669, Resolution 13.)
3. At its convention in 1951 the Wisconsin Synod declared the answers of our Praesidium to be unsatisfactory. (Wisconsin Synod Proceedings, 1951, p. 148.)
4. In 1952 the Wisconsin Synod appealed this matter to the Synodical Conference, whereupon the Synodical Conference passed a resolution urging "the Missouri Synod to take the steps necessary to bring about a God-pleasing disposition" of these matters. (Proceedings of the Synodical Conference, 1952, p. 157, II; p. 160.)
5. The Wisconsin Synod now appeals to this convention to "reconsider the reply" of our Praesidium. (Memorial 610.3, Reports and Memorials, 1953.)
6. Your Committee has studied
  - a) the questions addressed to our Synod;
  - b) the reply of our Praesidium to these questions;
  - c) the action of the Wisconsin Synod at its 1951 convention; and
  - d) the action of the Synodical Conference on the appeal of the Wisconsin Synod (cf. Proceedings, Synodical Conference, 1952, pages 157-160).

Your Committee believes that the letter of the Praesidium correctly states the Scriptural principles in the matters concerned; however,

WHEREAS, Not only matters of doctrine, but also the application of Scriptural principles to exceptional cases are involved in Memorial 610.3; and

WHEREAS, Such cases cannot be adequately considered on the floor of the Convention; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That this Convention ask the Praesidium to continue to "take the steps necessary to bring about a God-pleasing disposition of the matters" mentioned in this memorial; and that the Wisconsin Synod be informed of this action of the Convention.

This resolution takes note of the fact that grievances of the Wisconsin Synod had not been resolved by the letter of the Praesidium and urges the Praesidium to take further steps toward resolving them. Thereby Synod declared that it is quite anxious that these matters be settled and the disturbance removed. The Wisconsin Synod should certainly not take such a negative stand as now to sever fellowship with Missouri because the matter was placed back into the hands of the Praesidium for further action.

## ***II. Cooperation of Welfare Agencies with Similar Agencies of Other Lutheran Bodies***

In a number of states, counties, cities or communities Lutheran welfare agencies have formed a Welfare Council or a Federation of Lutheran Agencies in order to combine efforts in dealing with state, county, or city welfare departments and in matters of public relations, community service, social work and representation in the administration of the Community Chest. These federations are federations of Lutheran health and welfare agencies and not at all an organization of synods or congregations. They limit joint endeavors strictly to externals while spiritual work, church work, is just as strictly carried on and supported by the several synodical districts or synodical congregations or individuals.

They may reach a comity agreement as to the institutional chaplaincies to be filled from each body, but the chaplains are called and salaried and supervised in their work by the respective church bodies. Members of our churches are in no case assigned to the care of chaplains of other Lutheran bodies with whom we are not in fellowship. They are served by their own pastors or, at their request, by our own chaplains.

"Lutheran Charities of Chicago" especially has been under fire. Prof. Edmund C. Reim in his booklet, "Where Do We Stand?" pages 30 and 31, raises objection against this arrangement on the basis of an article in the "Lutheran Witness"

of March 8, 1949. For correct judgment in this matter, the following information is submitted:

1. When in a meeting held June 30, 1938, the Lutheran Charities Council (an organization of the charitable agencies of the Missouri Synod in the Chicago area) resolved to join the Lutheran Church Charities Committee, as Lutheran Charities was then known, it did so under the following condition:

"That our agencies cooperate with the L.C.C.C. and be represented on the L.C.C.C. by the chairman and two members of the Lutheran Charities Council and that a pastoral advisor be added to this committee who may cooperate in external matters only with the L.C.C.C. provided our Lutheran Charities Council and our agencies are assured that the Constitution and the By-Laws as presented by L.C.C.C. provide for a purely civic association. Should at any time doctrinal questions, religious principles or practices, become involved in the action or proceedings of the L.C.C.C. to which our council or agencies may object, our connections may be withdrawn from the L.C.C.C. without prejudice in any way."

2. Under date of November 7, 1938, the Lutheran Charities Council was informed as to the action of the Lutheran Church Charities Committee as follows:

"This is to inform you that your letter of August 18 was presented to the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Church Charities Committee at its meeting held September 9, 1938, and the conditions under which the agencies of the Missouri Synod would join the Lutheran Church Charities Committee were discussed. It was unanimously decided that the resolution, as submitted by your Lutheran Charities Council of your synod, for cooperation with our committee and the list of representatives for all your agencies be accepted and spread upon the minutes of the Lutheran Church Charities Committee."

Original copies of the minutes and letter are on file in the office of Pastor Witte.

3. To this communication Pastor Witte adds the following:

"While discussions were under way leading to my acceptance of the position as Executive Director of Lutheran Charities (which by the way was under a contract and not a 'call'), I asked for assurance that in line of my duties I would not be required to act in any way contrary to the principles of my synod with respect to church union or fellowship. I received the following reply under date of May 5, 1944:

" 'We must make it clear that we are simply presenting a Lutheran Charities program to the community and a united effort to further strengthen,



develop and coordinate the services of all Lutheran welfare agencies in the Chicago area. We should be very careful so as not to disturb any of our Missouri brethren for whom I have a great respect and admiration and ever seek to promote our welfare work so as to merit and hold their cooperation and support in this great venture.'"

4. Prof. Edmund C. Reim, in his booklet, "Where Do We Stand?" pages 30 and 31, under the heading, "A Formula Has Been Found," concentrates his attack on the statement of Pastor Witte, which follows. He writes:

"Our most serious misgivings are, however, raised by the following remarks of the Executive Director:

"'I do believe that in Lutheran Charities a formula has been found through which we can effectively cooperate with other Lutheran bodies and coordinate certain features of the work of our Church in which we all have an interest. Through contact rather than by controversy at a distance a contribution undoubtedly will be made toward the building of a unified Lutheran Church.'"

5. To this statement of the Executive Director, who happens to be a Missouri Lutheran pastor, Prof. Reim furnishes his own exegesis and then goes to work on it. He says:

"This 'formula' proposes a way by which the desired goal shall be reached without going to the unpleasant length of removing the existing doctrinal differences, the latter being a method which it dismisses rather contemptuously as a 'controversy at a distance.' Lutheranism will not be truly unified until these differences are removed. The more cooperation there is before this basic issue is faced, the less desire there will be to do this hard, this tiring part of the work. The foreseeable outcome of such a policy can only be a Lutheranism which may be outwardly united, but which falls far short of true inward unity. Intersynodical cooperation as an instrument for union has been advocated for quite some time. It is the declared policy of the National Lutheran Council. But at best it cannot be more than a sorry substitute for the real thing."

6. Now let us hear the Executive Director furnish his own exegesis to this quotation. In a letter to us he writes, having quoted his own statement from Prof. Reim's article:

"Then Reim goes on to charge that I am proposing to use this 'formula' to bring about Lutheran union without doctrinal unity.

"Of course I had and have no such intention and only by wrenching the above quotation from its context and reading into the words what they were not intended to say can such a view be taken. The 'formula' I mentioned is that discussed in chapter XII of 'Toward Lutheran Union' where Lutheran

Charities of Chicago is expressly mentioned. And the cooperation and co-ordination of certain features of the work of our church to which I referred are such things as welfare, world relief, clinical training, and similar undertakings where we have been able to 'cooperate' with other Lutheran synods without compromising our principles.

"What I tried to say, perhaps ineptly, in the last sentence quoted by Prof. Reim from my report, was that if Lutherans of various bodies would learn to know and understand one another by working together in areas where they can do so in good conscience, a contribution would be made towards Lutheran unity by the fact that discussions in this area would then be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly understanding.

"All of this Prof. Reim could have learned by consulting me before rushing into print. His action is a perfect example of what I described as 'controversy at a distance.'" (Letter on file.)

7. The constitution of the Lutheran Church Charities Committee states its objects in the following points:

## ARTICLE II

### Objects

Section 1. The objects of the Committee shall be:

To assist in uniting the various Lutheran Church Charities of the Chicago area into an organization to represent the Lutheran Church Charities social welfare program to the Community.

To assist the member agencies of the Committee to secure the necessary recognition in the community.

To assist the member agencies of the Committee in their approach to the Community Fund of Chicago.

To assist the member agencies of the Committee in adequate methods for financing the agencies.

To assist the member agencies of the Committee in a program to standardize their services.

To assist the member agencies of the Committee to study the social welfare program of the Community; to visualize the part of the agencies in such a program; to coordinate the services of our agencies in the fields where our services may be overlapping.

To assist the Lutheran Church (various synods) to develop such charities as may be needed in the community for serving the Lutheran constituency.

To assist the member agencies of the Committee in a program of co-

operation; to acquaint the agencies with one another; to arrange for conferences to discuss the work in the various fields of activity, such as Child Care, Homes for Aged, Family Welfare, Hospices and Health.

To assist in interesting the Lutheran constituency in the social welfare program of this community, through such established agencies as the Community Fund, Council of Social Agencies, and the United Charities, and to encourage representation of the Lutheran agencies on the Boards of these organizations.

In its preamble the constitution says:

"The Lutheran Church, divided as it is into various synodical bodies within which each in its own order operates its own institutions of mercy, has created in this community a complex system of social welfare service, in which each agency becomes an independent unit in administering to the needs of its particular group."

These are the principles on which these agencies within our Synod cooperate with other Lutheran agencies. If in such cooperation violations of the Scriptural principles of church fellowship occur, these are not ignored or glossed over, but adjudged according to the principles of Christian love by the respective district officials. Here we can only repeat what was said in our answer to your Synod in 1950:

"Cooperation of these agencies extends only to some external features which touch community and state affairs while the 'spiritual implications' are strictly taken care of by the several church bodies. Where this observation is not heeded, Scriptural principles of church fellowship are indeed violated and such violation is repudiated by our Synod in conformity with its declaration on church fellowship, as stated by our Synod's resolution."

### ***III. National Lutheran Editors and Managers Association***

is strictly a professional group of Publishing House Managers and Editors of Lutheran periodicals. Joint and separate meetings are held. If opened with a devotion, these are conducted by the host publisher's editor. In the Managers' section the position of President rotates.

Strictly professional matters are being discussed also in the Editors' section, such as, how to develop reader interest, gathering news, a well-rounded church paper, the place of apologetics and polemics, district supplements, etc.

Since it is a professional association, the question of church fellowship or unionism can hardly enter as far as the association is concerned.

#### **IV. *Bad Boll Conferences***

These conferences, held in Europe since 1948, were mutually arranged between our synod and our brethren in the European Free Churches on the one side and the other Lutheran churches (Landeskirchen) on the other side, for the purpose of rallying Lutheran churches, sorely depressed by the ravages of war, about the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and thus to strengthen Lutheranism in Europe over against the onslaughts of Romanism as well as Calvinism, sectarianism, and rationalism. They were held in Germany, France, England, and are now being contemplated, upon express invitations, also for Scandinavia. They were mutually arranged with the mutually expressed understanding that there is no church fellowship existing between these two churches, that as far as we are concerned, for the establishment of church fellowship, complete unity in doctrine is necessary, and our partners in the conferences are fully aware of our position. All exercise of church fellowship is, therefore, studiously and, in spite of repeated objections on the part of some participants to our position, avoided in obedience to the well-known passages of Scripture. It is also clearly understood that we meet in a spirit of willing obedience to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and that every difference in doctrine must be adjudged by the Scriptures. There is no condoning of error. All unionistic and syncretistic notions are excluded. Our constant declining of an active exercise of church fellowship has been a loud testimony to participants that schisms and divisions must be fully removed before such church fellowship can be established.

The morning and evening devotions are fully of a private nature and bear no semblance of even a feigned church fellowship. To apply the "avoid" and "withdraw" passages of Scripture to devotions of this kind and under these circumstances is evidently going beyond text and context of these passages and violating Scriptural injunctions concerning the communion of faith and Christian love and confession. Gal. 3:28; 1 Cor. 13:5-7; 1 Pet. 3:15. We also believe that in this position we are following in the footsteps of the fathers of our Synod concerning their free conferences.

#### **V. *Our Work in England***

In 1944 and 1945, while the war was still raging in Europe, our pastor in England called our attention to the sorry plight of a large number of refugee Lutherans in England and pleaded with us for financial help, by which the pastors of these people, working in a secular calling to earn subsistence for their families, might be released from such work to devote their entire time to the spiritual care of their people. These Lutherans, while nominally still connected with the church government of their respective homeland, now somewhere in exile, were in fact and reality orphaned and happy that our pastor in England secured help for them.

Physical relief was the great need if these Lutherans were not to be lost to their church and swallowed up by the Church of England. They could be served only by their own pastors. Our pastor acquainted them fully with our Scriptural position on doctrinal unity and church fellowship. Later the National Lutheran Council, acting in behalf of the Lutheran World Federation, in which the home churches of these Lutherans held membership, injected itself into this work of physical relief and we entered an agreement with them to share equally in providing such relief. Whether or not it was wise to enter into such a joint service in physical relief is a question on which opinions may differ; but it was entered with the distinct understanding that the actual church work was to be conducted fully and solely by these Lutherans themselves, that the Scriptural principles of church fellowship were to be upheld. These Lutherans are free lances and the question of future church fellowship will be decided by them.

Our pastor was elected by the group to be the chairman of the Lutheran Council of Great Britain, an agency through which the financial aid is channeled to be equitably distributed to the various Lutheran refugee groups. Under his leadership and upon the request of these Lutherans, doctrinal discussions are being carried on for the purpose of establishing doctrinal unity and a doctrinally united Lutheran Church in Great Britain and subsequently to decide the question of church fellowship. In the meantime, we have continued our share of physical relief for these pastors, but have consistently declined to enter any kind of joint church work with the NLC. We fully realize that the situation in England is of a singular nature and emergency and that measures taken are exceptional and must be so understood. We also realize that this situation is fraught with great dangers that those who are involved may go beyond clear limitations of Scriptural principles on church fellowship, but these dangers have been faced by our men with a determination that Scriptural principles of fellowship must be upheld and that in the midst of these dangers service must be rendered to the Lutherans in England in their extreme emergency. We know of no instance in which our men violated principles of church fellowship or permitted these principles to be violated. These Lutherans in England are fully aware of the fact that the question of church fellowship must come to a decision. They are preparing for it by an intense study of doctrines and by doctrinal discussions not only among the pastors, but also in the congregations.

Surely, we do believe that, if our brethren of the Wisconsin Synod will examine at close range all the factors involved in this situation, they will forbear and pray with us that the Lord may bless the endeavors of the Lutherans in England for the upbuilding of a truly Lutheran church. Our fellow Lutherans elsewhere have also looked into this unique situation in England and have not found it wanting in upholding and advocating Scriptural principles.

By no means should this work in England be considered a just cause for severing fellowship relations with our synod.

## **VI. The Lutheran Men in America of Wisconsin and The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod**

In an essay delivered by one of the district presidents of the Wisconsin Synod at the meeting held in Milwaukee, January 12-15, 1954, the attempt is made "to prove by quoting pertinent passages from the Word of God, that members (our emphasis) of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have practiced and are practicing fellowship with those who are not in accord with us in doctrine and practice."

Let us state from the outset that it cannot be and is not denied that "members" of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod have, on occasion, practiced such fellowship. However, that this has been sanctioned or even condoned by The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, we cannot grant. We know that men who have been guilty of such unionistic practices have been, and are now being dealt with by the proper synodical officials.

After quoting the report of the Floor Committee on Church Union of the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, submitted to the Watertown convention, August 5-12, 1953, and the declaration of the Wisconsin Synod's Standing Committee on Church Union (Synodical Conference Report, 1950, pages 128 and 129), the essayist adduces a number of Scripture passages to show that church fellowship with those who are not agreed with us in every doctrine of God's Word is forbidden.

Then the essayist proceeds to cite instances of violation of the principles set forth in the Holy Scriptures and mentions, first, the Lutheran Men in America of Wisconsin. The implication seems to be that The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and its clergy gave consent or at least closed an eye to the organization of this group, while the Wisconsin Synod and its clergy vigorously opposed it. We quote once more from the essay: "The Pastoral Conference of the Wisconsin Synod of Milwaukee labeled this organization of all Lutheran men from every synodical body as unionistic." (September or October, 1947.)

Now, let us look at the record. Almost a whole year earlier and PRIOR TO THE ORGANIZATION of Lutheran Men in America of Wisconsin, the Concordia College Pastoral Conference (Missouri Synod) concerned itself with the L.M.A. We quote from the conference minutes of October 7, 1946:

"Pres. Rincker introduced the problem of 'The Lutheran Men in America,' a national intersynodical organization of Lutheran Laymen. Pres. Rincker accepted the invitation to offer the invocation at a banquet for this organization on October 25. Advance publicity by the sponsoring committee gave exaggerated significance to Pres. Rincker's appearance for the occasion, whereupon Pres. Rincker met with the committee to object to the wording of the invitation. The committee willingly repudiated the invitation and claimed that the objectives of the organization included neither unionistic endeavors nor common enterprise in education or other

fields. Prof. Rincker had accepted the invitation in order to exert some influence and offer guidance in this organization."

At the same meeting a committee of five was elected "to meet with and give counsel to the Missouri Synod laymen on the local Lutheran Men in America steering committee" and "President Rincker was asked to decline to give the banquet invocation," which he did. "A motion to stand opposed to the L.M.A. organization was tabled."

The reason for tabling this motion was the fact that there was as yet no organization to oppose, nor was a constitution available upon which to base such opposition.

Certainly fair minded men, especially Christians, will not and cannot oppose an organization simply because it is composed of men of different religious convictions and beliefs without knowing the purpose of the organization, or without giving these men a hearing. Our laymen are intelligent human beings who do their own thinking and are not satisfied by a resolution of a conference, even though it be a pastoral conference. They want to know and have a right to know the why and wherefore of such resolutions. Naturally they make mistakes; they are still sinners; but at times we pastors may be responsible, at least to some extent, for their mistakes either because we have not indoctrinated them as we should, or because we do not take the time or exercise the patience to guide and lead them in the right direction. It is much easier to pass resolutions.

It is our personal conviction that much of the trouble caused by the Lutheran Men in America of Wisconsin could have been avoided if we, the clergy of the Synodical Conference in Milwaukee, had been ready and willing to give proper advice and counsel and guidance when the organization of the group was contemplated and when that advice and counsel and guidance was sought and might have been heeded. Instead we passed resolutions.

It may be of interest to know that in the writer's own congregation we did not try to forbid the laymen to attend the meeting of October 25, 1946, called for the purpose of considering the organization of a local L.M.A. We did, however, ask our men not to commit themselves to membership until we had an opportunity to learn more about the organization and its aims and purposes. As a result, some of our men attended, but until now we do not have a single member affiliated with the Lutheran Men in America in our congregation. We say this, not in a spirit of boastfulness, but with a feeling of deep gratitude to the Almighty, to show that dangers and pitfalls can be avoided if our pastors will warn against them in a spirit of love and understanding and in the fear of God.

But let us return to the minutes of the Concordia College Conference. On October 28, 1946, the following resolution was presented and adopted:

"WHEREAS, the movement inaugurated and given momentum by the Lutheran Men in America is based on the wrong principle, being unionistic and indifferent to the doctrine of the synods from which membership is drawn; not marking those who cause divisions and offenses, but ignoring all that Scripture says in so many passages on false doctrine;

"Therefore, the Milwaukee Pastoral Conference of the Missouri Synod, assembled in special meeting, October 28, 1946, respectfully requests:

1. That Synod's President and Vice-Presidents take official cognizance of this movement;
2. That Synod's President and Vice-Presidents voice themselves in the official church papers on the issues involved;
3. That Synod's officials deal with such pastors as lend their good offices as spiritual advisers to laymen outside of their locality and jurisdiction."

Copies of this resolution were forwarded to the President and Vice-Presidents of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod on October 29, 1946. Correspondence on file shows that this resolution received the attention of the Synodical Praesidium, that Dr. Behnken did publish an article in the Lutheran Witness, and, we know this personally, that "such pastors as lend their good offices as spiritual advisers to laymen outside their locality and jurisdiction" were dealt with by synodical and district officials.

Perhaps the most important and significant resolution of the Concordia College Pastoral Conference was that of February 2, 1948:

WHEREAS, one of the objects of the organization of the Missouri Synod is to conserve and promote unity of the true faith (Eph. 4, 3-6; 1 Cor. 1, 10) and to present a united defense against schism and sectarianism; and

WHEREAS, true Christian charity requires the witnessing of the truth at all times so that those in error may have the truth confessed to them; and

WHEREAS, the condoning of false doctrine or false practice makes men the partakers of other men's sins (1 Tim. 5, 22); and

WHEREAS, this requires that the orthodox do nothing and say nothing that grants or appears to grant to any heterodox teaching or practice an equal status with the unadulterated truth of Revelation; and

WHEREAS, the Centennial Convention of the Missouri Synod still recognized certain differences between itself and the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church; and



WHEREAS, these differences still prevent pulpit, altar, and prayer fellowship (although the precise definition of prayer fellowship is still to be clarified); and

WHEREAS, the laity as well as the clergy of the Missouri Synod must not enter into any joint endeavor which is out of harmony with these principles; therefore

"BE IT RESOLVED:

1. that joint Reformation services or joint services of similar nature for any other purpose constitute forbidden fellowship;
2. that joint retreats similarly entrench upon a forbidden area of fellowship — although separate retreats for the members of the several synodical groupings would be in order;
3. that joint youth projects which militate against any of the principles named above are not permissible;
4. that the use of the terms "fellowship" and "cooperation", and the practice thereof, must exclude everything which involves a denial or compromise of the principles for which the Missouri Synod stands;
5. that joint projects in youth work or in adult work which parallel or compete with the work and purposes of the Walther League or with the work and purposes of the various boards and committees of the Missouri Synod or any other synod, cannot be countenanced;
6. that in the field of publicity any mixed organization of Lutherans must not commit the Missouri Synod, or any other synod, or the Lutheran Church as a whole, to any false or ambiguous statement or position;
7. that even an organization's unintentional failure in word or deed to observe the limitations in principle and practice herein stated, especially if these failures repeat themselves, will necessitate the opposition of the pastors of the Missouri Synod.

"AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

1. that, rather than encourage our members to join an organization of this kind, the pastors warn their members of the perils and difficulties involved in membership; and
2. that the pastors specifically warn their men of aforesaid perils and admonish them to stand for the Scriptural principles of their Synod."

These resolutions were presented to the chairman of the Lutheran Men in America of Wisconsin and were received favorably by him according to the minutes, p. 241.

We bring these excerpts from the minutes of the Concordia College Conference to demonstrate that this conference was deeply concerned about and recognized the dangers inherent in the L.M.A., and that the implication or insinuation that the Missouri Synod clergy gave consent or closed an eye to the organization of the L.M.A. is not in accord with the facts.

When the Synodical Conference finally took official cognizance of and action against the Lutheran Men in America of Wisconsin in August, 1952, which resulted in much unfavorable comment in the Milwaukee daily press and for a time threatened an open break between the L.M.A. and the Synodical Conference, it was again the clergy of the Missouri Synod of Milwaukee who undertook the task of trying to avoid the break.

Again we say, it is comparatively easy to pass resolutions, but it is difficult to make laymen see the reason for such resolutions, especially when they have never been given the privilege of a hearing or an explanation before such resolutions are passed. Would we call this evangelical procedure? When we discover a lodge member in our congregation, do we excommunicate him immediately? Do we not rather deal with the man personally and attempt to show him that membership in a lodge and in a Christian congregation are incompatible, that the lodge is un-Christian, and that, therefore, he should and must sever his connection with that organization; and in that way endeavor to save him for Christ and the Church? That is evangelical; that is the way God expects us to proceed.

With this in mind, we arranged meetings with men from the Missouri Synod who are members of the Board of Directors of the L.M.A. of Wisconsin. We "pulled no punches" in these meetings. Those men were shown that the Synodical Conference was justified in passing its resolution because of things that had been done in the past. To their credit let it be said, these men were willing to cooperate. We dare say that they understand the situation much better today because we were willing to sit down with them and discuss their problems.

We suggested changes in their constitution, in the editorial policy of their official publication — "The Milwaukee Lutheran" — in the conduct of their meetings, and in the selection of speakers for their programs. Every suggestion we made was brought to the attention of the entire Board of Directors and, we are told, has been adopted by them.

We do not mean to imply that the L.M.A. has received the sanction of the Milwaukee clergy of the Missouri Synod — it has not; nor do we mean to infer that the L.M.A., as now constituted, should or can be recommended to our laymen — it cannot; but, we ask, by what stretch of the imagination can our action with

regard to this organization be construed as a reason for the breaking off of relations between the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, for the disrupting of the Synodical Conference?

In his essay, the district president of the Wisconsin Synod also mentioned "Andy Pafko Night in Milwaukee" as an example of unionistic practice in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod. This charge is so ridiculous that, in our humble opinion, it does not deserve an answer. We were not in attendance on this occasion; however, we are told by the essayist that "Director Elmer Eggold, of our Lutheran High School, spoke in behalf of all Lutherans in the city, and a Bible was presented by the faculty of Concordia College to our star right outfielder of the Braves." If Prof. Eggold said that all Lutherans of Milwaukee are proud of the fact that Mr. Pafko is a Lutheran, is that something that is condemned by God Himself in His Holy Word? Can it be inferred from such a statement that all Lutherans agree on everything else; e.g., doctrine and practice?

"A Bible was presented by the faculty of Concordia College." What better gift could the faculty of Concordia College have made to a fellow Lutheran who, by the way, is an active member of a congregation of the Synodical Conference? And even if he were not, would that be unionism? We have presented the Bible or portions of it to people with whom we were not one in faith. Is that wrong, is it sinful, when we believe the Bible to be "the power of God unto salvation", a means the Holy Spirit uses to create faith? Would the brethren of the Wisconsin Synod refuse or be ashamed to make a public presentation of the Holy Scriptures?

There are grave issues confronting our Church today; let us ask God for grace and wisdom to resolve them according to His Word and Will. But let us not seek cause for disagreement where it cannot be found.

# CONTINUED NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE ALC

One of the charges of the Wisconsin Synod against the Missouri Synod refers to continued negotiations with the American Lutheran Church despite the fact that this body has stated that "it is neither possible nor necessary to agree on all non-fundamental doctrines" and also "contends for an allowable and wholesome latitude for theological opinions on the basis of the teaching of the Word of God."

The quotations in the previous paragraph refer to the so-called "Friendly Invitation" extended by the Commissioners of the American Lutheran Church. The LUTHERAN STANDARD of March 22, 1947, under the title "A. L. C. Fellowship Committee Extends Friendly Invitation", published a statement, from which we quote the following:

- "1. Our Committee is bound by and herewith reiterates the position formulated in the resolution adopted by the American Lutheran Church in 1938, to wit:

'That we declare the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod, together with the Declaration of our Commission, a sufficient doctrinal basis for church fellowship between the Missouri Synod and the American Lutheran Church.

'That, according to our conviction and the resolution of the Synod of Missouri, passed at its convention in St. Louis, the afore-mentioned doctrinal agreement is a sufficient doctrinal basis for church-fellowship, and that we are firmly convinced that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines. Nevertheless, we are willing to continue the negotiations concerning the points termed in our Declaration as "not divisive of church fellowship", and recognized as such by the Missouri Synod's resolutions, and instruct our Commission on Fellowship accordingly.

" ...

- "3. We hold that the slight divergencies in language and point of view between the Brief Statement and the Declaration all lie in areas where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God.

"....."

This statement of the "Friendly Invitation" is without question too broad and too sweeping. While it evidently refers only to the four points of doctrine in the

St. Louis resolutions of which our resolutions state that "they need not be divisive of church fellowship," but concerning which the St. Louis resolutions also state that "we endeavor to establish full agreement," it nevertheless should not stand, because the limitations are not expressed definitely enough, so that the statement can be misused to apply not only to certain points of doctrines, but to all non-fundamental doctrines.

How have the brethren of the Wisconsin Synod used this "Friendly Invitation"? First of all, the two objectionable statements have been taken out of their context and misused as a general statement referring to all non-fundamental doctrines of Scripture, while the context clearly shows that they have reference only to the four or five points of the doctrines mentioned in the St. Louis resolutions, involving exegetical difficulties.

As to the first statement "that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines," this statement occurred first in the Sandusky resolutions of the American Lutheran Church in 1938.

Our Committee on Doctrinal Unity immediately took note of this resolution and expressed its objection to the Fellowship Commissioners of the American Lutheran Church. The Commissioners gave an explanation of this resolution to our Committee on Doctrinal Unity and in 1940 at their convention in Detroit the American Lutheran Church adopted the following explanatory resolution:

"We declare that by including this or a similar statement, we did not want to cast any doubt on the binding force of any Biblical statement. We concur with our Commissioners and say, 'To be sure, everything that Scriptures teach is God's Word and therefore binding.' However, for clarity's sake we add: Not every traditional explanation of a Scriptural statement is binding. The traditional explanation may not be the sense intended by the Holy Ghost and therefore may make further study under His guidance necessary; and since human short-sightedness and sin may preclude the finding or universal acceptance of the divinely intended sense, we thank God that it is not necessary for the establishment of church fellowship to agree in every explanation of a Scriptural statement."

Our Committee on Doctrinal Unity never sanctioned any kind of "latitudinarianism" in doctrine in its negotiations with the American Lutheran Church. On the contrary, our Committee strongly opposed it, as is evidenced by the fact that the following clear and definite statement was embodied in Part I of the Common Confession:

"It is the duty of the Church to be faithful to its Lord and His Word in all its testimony, to be steadfast in its confession of His truth at all times, and to avoid and combat error. It is the duty of the Church to mold and keep its practice in conformity with the Lord's directives in the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, we dare not condone error or have altar and pulpit fellowship and unscriptural cooperation

with erring individuals, church bodies, or church groups that refuse to be corrected by God's Word . . ."

That statement cancels a latitudinarian interpretation of the "Friendly Invitation":

"That it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines."

In the meeting of the Wisconsin Synod in 1951, the following resolution was passed:

"4. And be it further resolved:

"a. That we direct the attention of our sister-Synod of Missouri to the position which the American Lutheran Church has taken in the Friendly Invitation of March 4, 1947, with the remark contending for 'an area where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teaching of the Word of God,' and that we indicate to The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod that this position of the American Lutheran Church challenges the clarity and therefore the authority of the Scriptures. (Ps. 119:105). This can only cause confusion and disturbance in the church. Therefore negotiations should be suspended.

"b. That we further indicate to the sister Synod of Missouri that not until the American Lutheran Church recognizes this as the basic problem which must first be considered and settled, will the obstacle to the renewal of doctrinal discussions have been removed. (Cf. Convention Proceedings of the Joint Synod, 1939, page 61, 2b and c.)."

This resolution of the Wisconsin Synod was passed in August 1951. The President of our Synod was apprised of this resolution. In the very next meeting of our Committee on Doctrinal Unity with the Commission on Fellowship of the American Lutheran Church, held in Chicago on October 4, 1951, this resolution of the Wisconsin Synod prompted our Committee on Doctrinal Unity to take up the discussion of the Friendly Invitation (which, by the way, is not a resolution of the American Lutheran Church, but merely of its Committee on Fellowship) and it was fully discussed when the question of church fellowship was under consideration and worded in the Common Confession, Part II.

The statement of Part II on this point reads:

"Ultimately all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures have an organic connection with the central theme of the Scriptures, which is the Gospel. A denial of any teaching of the Scriptures involves a mutilation of, and departure from, the

complete Gospel, and it is for this reason that a full and common obedience to the Holy Scriptures is an indispensable requisite for church fellowship." II, 2(7).

A committee that will adopt this statement can no longer subscribe to a broad interpretation of the "Friendly Invitation," yea, has cancelled actually even though not formally any and every broad interpretation.

We believe that the request of the Wisconsin Synod in the afore-stated resolution of the 1951 convention addressed to the Missouri Synod has been heeded by the Missouri Synod and the answer is given in Part II of the Common Confession.

It will now be necessary that the American Lutheran Church adopt the statement and carry it into practice before any fellowship with the American Lutheran Church can come into question on our part.

We are therefore surprised that the Wisconsin Synod still insists on this charge against the Missouri Synod and is ready to sever fellowship with Missouri on account of it.

# NEGOTIATIONS WITH DEISTIC ORGANIZATIONS

This objection to Missouri was added from the floor of the Wisconsin Synod Convention October 8 and 9, 1953. Without seeking to bring a thorough proof from God's Word that such negotiating was sinful, it was added as evidence of the break the Missouri Synod had brought about in the Synodical Conference. It was simply stated that the church has not the right to "negotiate with ungodly organizations in order to make them a little less ungodly." As far as I could gather, the words "avoid them" were applied to this action of Missouri to stigmatize it as unionism.

There are those who say: Christ and the apostles bring us no examples, where they negotiated in that manner. Consequently it is not permissible.

Brethren, what new theology is this? It certainly is neither Scriptural nor Lutheran! If we are going to apply "avoid them" to every action of our brethren, even where no spiritual fellowship is involved, we are beginning to "teach for doctrines the commandments of men." We are putting into God's Word what God never put there. We are adding to Scripture. If we argue: Christ and the apostles never negotiated with deistic or similar organizations to get them to drop their deistic formulas, therefore we dare not, we are setting up a new principle in theology that is strange to Scripture and our Church. We are making a thing a sin, which God has not clearly called a sin. Again, we are setting up vain worship, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. I know the brethren in the Wisconsin Synod want to do that as little as we do. But with their objections to "negotiations with deistic organizations to drop their rituals" they are setting up rules and laws not laid down in God's Word.

Peter, the apostle, tells us (1 Peter 3, 15): "Be ready always to give an answer to everyone that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." Paul, the apostle, declares: "I am set for a defense of the Gospel." (Phil. 1, 17) Over the decades our Church has found it necessary to warn our people against the deistic worship which had become a part of the lodge system. Here our people were being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" in what was supposed to be a spiritual worship of a god that did not exist. Here hopes for heaven by man's merit became part of the worship into which our people were to be closely joined with the professed Christ-rejecters. As a result, we had to say to our people with the apostle Paul: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." (2 Cor. 6, 17)

As a result, our people would tell lodge authorities again and again: "We cannot join your lodge." Often they would merely add: "Our church is against it."



Naturally, lodge authorities would ask: "Why?" They would even press our people and our pastors for the reason. So it became the obligation of our church to "give an answer" to everyone that asked us "a reason of the hope" that was within us.

We found that many lodge people and many lodge leaders had never realized that there could be an objection to this type of natural man's religion. One leader told me "A little religion is good for everybody. That's what we are trying to give them." When he was told: "Christ is our religion and Him you have utterly ignored," he was more than surprised.

Most of the lodges or fraternal groups were not so much interested in their "lodge religion" as they were interested in insurance, social activities that they called fellowship, etc. When, therefore, they heard of our objections to any and all religious worship in connection with their activities, they asked: "What do you recommend should be done to meet your objections?" Again we were to be ready according to God's Word to give an answer. That is what we did. As a result, a number of lodges have dropped their rituals, others are modifying them. We do not thereupon recommend these groups to our people. We take no position, where a matter has become an adiaphoron. That is Scriptural. We warn against features in any organization where there have been modifications but not elimination of all worship features. Our church has compiled information on these matters, has warned consistently against the false worship of lodgery, has put itself on record on how to deal with lodgery in greater detail than any other Lutheran body today. At its Houston convention, it has clearly spoken in the matter of admission of lodge members in the church. It is interested, not in the matter of merely keeping its people out of lodges, because that is a "rule", but in keeping souls from being destroyed by merging into a deistic fellowship. It will do what it can to help remove such deistic worship, where lodge groups, not considering it essential, will be led to eliminate it, and in this way eliminate a grave danger to the souls of men.

The AOUW of North Dakota was a full-fledged lodge. Some of our people were prevailed upon to join it under the pretense of the AOUW being an insurance company. When their pastor brought this to my attention, he, I and a few others asked for an interview with the head of the AOUW in Fargo to protest such procedure of luring our people into their lodge under false pretenses. Out of that interview came further discussions. The result of our testimony for the Gospel against their false deistic worship was that all of this worship was dropped, in fact, the whole ritual was eliminated. Today the AOUW of North Dakota, operating in more than twenty states, is the Pioneer Mutual Insurance Company. Wisconsin Synod pastors have written me to thank me for being helpful in bringing about this change.

Just where have I been guilty of denial? Of unionism? Of any particular sin against God's Word in initiating and carrying through the procedure outlined above?

Brethren! Let's not set up new commandments of men! Let's not try to hinder the giving of testimony by applying "avoid them" where God never gave us the authority to apply this word. If we do that, we can ourselves become makers of schisms.

# SCOUTISM

In the following paper I shall

1. Briefly answer the question: Has Missouri Changed its Position on Scouting?
2. Analyze the "Report of the Norwegian Synod and Wisconsin Synod Members of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting" as it appears in the Synodical Conference Report of 1952 (P. 147).

## I. HAS MISSOURI CHANGED ITS POSITION ON SCOUTING?

That is one of the objections raised by the Wisconsin Synod to Missouri's stand on the Boy Scouts (Proceedings Wis. Synod 1951, pp. 141-142). Beginning with the Missouri Synod convention in 1929, when the School Board of Synod petitioned the convention assembled in that year to appoint a committee to inform itself thoroughly on the Boy Scout Movement and advise Synod at the next convention what stand to take in the matter, down to our latest convention in Houston in 1953, Synod has been dealing with the matter of Scoutism. There were certain principles and practices that Synod found in Scoutism as it existed in those days that had to be eliminated before Synod would take any positive action in the matter of Boy Scouts. As early as 1935 and 1938 the committee could report that changes were being made and our objections were being met. In 1944 Synod adopted the resolution:

"that the matter of Scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide and that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected." A quote from "Scouting in the Lutheran Church" is recorded, page 257 (Proc. 1944): "We recognize that there is no boy scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and the congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of Lutheran men and boys in scouting, and the purpose of this Lutheran Manual is to guide the local pastor and congregation in their efforts to supplement the Scout program with the spiritual program of the Church."

Let us consider then briefly some of the changes made in Scoutism:

1. Formerly the Scout movement was predicated on certain "religious values" on "spiritual ends." (Opinion of the Synodical Board for Young People's Work. p. 2.)

This attitude has been dropped. The church is given full charge of anything religious. Originally the church committee had only advisory power. Now it is supervisory.

"The Boy Scout Councils, local and national, do not administer a Boy Scout troop anywhere. The parent institutions, church, clubs, etc., administer their own troops." "The church leaders in the local communities should clearly understand that they have full charge of the administration of their own Scout troops through the supervision of the troop committee, which is appointed by the local church board of the congregation. This troop committee secures the Scoutmaster and continues to serve as his supervisory committee." (Scouting under Protestant Leadership. p. 24.)

2. Originally religious services at camps were obligatory. There were also unionistic religious services sponsored by the Boy Scout Council, which the Boy Scout was obligated to attend.

As early as 1935 Boy Scout headquarters declared themselves eager and willing to cooperate in removing this feature. Dr. Ray O. Wyland, Director of Education and Relationships, endorsed the report which Synod's Board for Young People's Work made to the 1935 convention at Cleveland. Among other things, this report stated that letters had gone out from Scout headquarters announcing a revision of practice, for instance, with respect to religious services at camp. "We have a regulation which protects the church against participation of Lutheran boys in unionistic services conducted by sectarians" says this report, quoting Dr. Wyland. Another quote: "Boys of exclusive religious groups will not be invited to participate in the union services in camp." Since that time, headquarters has arranged matters so that no services whatsoever are to be conducted by Boy Scout councils.

3. Removal of other objectional features was agreed to.

"You understand, of course, that we will eliminate all phases of secrecy, all prayers and ceremonies that may be interpreted as religious, and any phase of obligation which bears the earmarks of an oath." (Letter from Boy Scout headquarters, July 17, 1934.)

"I am sending your letter around to our editors and am asking them to be on their guard so as to remove from all our literature any reference which may be interpreted as nature worship." (Excerpts from a similar letter.)

### The Report

II. Analysis of the report of the Norwegian Synod and Wisconsin Synod Members of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting as it appears in the Synodical Conference Report of 1952.

### Objection 1

"In its mandatory Scout oath and law, Scouting endeavors to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion", Cf. Rom. 8, 8; John 3, 6:

Answer: To say Scouting endeavors to do this is not correct. "Endeavors" means "to try to achieve," "to work for a certain end." Scouting does not even set up any plan of its own to get the boys "to do their duty to God without conversion" or with conversion for that matter. It recognizes the fact that different boys belong to different churches. It leaves the question of the motivation for "doing their duty to God" to the churches the boys are affiliated with. It takes a completely *neutral* position in this matter. A Christian organization, avowedly Christian, could not take such a position. A secular organization can take no other.

Art. III., Section 1, Constitution of the Boy Scouts of America: "The Boy Scouts of America maintains that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God. In the first part of the Boy Scouts' Oath or Promise, the boy declares, 'On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country, and to obey the Scout Law.' The recognition of God as the ruling and leading power in the universe and the grateful acknowledgment of His favors and blessings are necessary to the best type of citizenship and wholesome precepts in the education of the growing boy. No matter what the boy may be — Catholic or Protestant or Jew — this fundamental need of good citizenship should be kept before him. The Boy Scouts of America, therefore, recognizes the religious element in the training of the boy, but it is absolutely non-sectarian in its attitude toward the religious training. Its policy is that the organization or institution with which the Boy Scout is connected shall give definite attention to his religious life. Only persons willing to subscribe to the declaration of principle shall be entitled to certificates of leadership in carrying out the Boy Scout program."

### Objection 2

"By means of its mandatory Scout oath and law, Scouting endeavors to train Christian character without the motivation of the Gospel. Cf. Gal. 2, 19.20; Gal. 3, 10; Eph. 2, 8-10, and John 15, 5."

Answer: Same as above.

### Objection 3

"The 'Scout oath or promise' is an oath condemned by the Word of God." Matt. 5, 33-37; James 5, 12; Matt. 23, 16-22.

Answer: This is not an oath in the Biblical sense of the term. "Upon my honor" means "that I can be trusted to be truthful and honest." God's name is not involved at all. This definition from the "Handbook for Scoutmasters," p. 249 is quoted in "Scouting in the Light of Holy Scripture", Erhard C. Pankow, p. 22.

#### Objection 4

"The twelfth Scout law is basically unionistic, since it obligates every Scout to faithfulness in his religious duties without defining these duties or the God whom he is to serve, cf. 2. John 9.10; 2. Cor. 6, 14-18.

Answer: "Scouting recognizes the need for religious training in the life of the growing boy and urges its practice, but does not assume authority for the boy's religious instruction." (Fundamentals, 1945, p. 34.)

Nowhere does the Constitution of the Boy Scouts of America claim to strive for anything higher than to develop "the best type of citizenship." It never introduces:

1. Joint religious worship
2. Training for eternity
3. Prayers
4. Worship of any particular god . . . or of God

Even when the 12th Scout law reads: "A Scout is reverent," this is explained: "He is reverent toward God. He is faithful in his religious duties, and respects the convictions of others in matters of custom and religion." It leaves to the parents of the boys and to his church everything that deals with the application of these goals, their motivation, and their carrying out. Even in its "power to revoke charters," it can never revoke a charter because of what a Lutheran boy is taught regarding his relation to God and his fellowmen by his supervising Lutheran Committee and pastor.

The "Good Turn" is no part of an alleged Scouting program of salvation by character, but a part of good citizenship.

The "Brotherhood" of Scouting does not have the connotation of Scriptural brotherhood but again refers to civic brotherhood.

The "moral straightness" of Scouting is not intended to qualify as Scriptural morality, but again is a mark of good citizenship.

For this reason the Scripture passages referred to do not apply.

Where there is a difference between Wisconsin and our theologians concerning the application of the natural knowledge of God and civic righteousness, the Synodical Conference has made the provision that these differences be studied by our faculties.

Should it become necessary to ask the Boy Scouts of America to make further changes in their regulations, there is no reason from past experience to assume that they will not be glad to cooperate, where we can bring good reasons . . .

good for us because they are based on conscience bound by God's Word . . . for such changes.

Boy Scouts of America is a secular organization for boys. It may not be ideal for our use. An ideal organization is one that would be completely controlled by us. However, its program made available with the safeguards given, does not make for unionism on the part of him that uses this program.

# SEPARATISM

What is separation or schism? When does a person become a separatist or a schismatic? Pieper says: "Schismatics are those who cause a separation in the church which is not commanded by God's Word, but is brought about by one's own choice, hence in a sinful manner." III, 492. The Concordia Cyclopedia says: "Schism (schizein, to split) is the term employed to denote a division, or rupture, in the Church on questions of discipline or church government." A separatist is a person who causes a separation in the church without a clear and definite command of the Word of God.

The only question that has any real validity in the Church of Jesus Christ is the question, "Has the Lord spoken?"

This question is all-important also when the issue of continued church fellowship is under discussion. The establishment of true Scriptural fellowship is the work of the Holy Ghost, not the work of men. Once the Holy Ghost has worked this miracle, Christians are to endeavor, make every effort, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Eph. 4:6. If Christians sever the fellowship, they must be sure that the Lord has spoken.

The question, "Has the Lord spoken?" must be applied in a two-fold manner. In connection with every issue mentioned as warranting termination of fellowship, it must be definitely established that the Lord has spoken, that He has expressed Himself so clearly on the issue involved that no Christian dare refuse to follow. Mere human judgment, human conviction, human evaluation of the situation dare never take the place of Scripture.

Again, it must be demonstrated that the Lord clearly requires the breaking of fellowship relations because of an issue. The New Testament clearly shows that not every difference automatically disrupts fellowship. According to Romans 14 some Christians were firmly convinced that they might eat all things, esteem every day alike, while others were fully persuaded that they could eat only herbs and that they must esteem one day above another. Still fellowship continued. Moreover, St. Paul for years had to defend the Gospel liberty against certain men from James, Gal. 2:12. When later he came to Jerusalem, where thousands of Jewish believers were all zealous of the law, Paul did not feel that he could no longer fellowship with them; He even submitted to a purification ceremony that "all may know that those things whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself walkest orderly and keepest the law," Acts 21:24. These situations of Scripture apply to cases in controversy among us that have been adjudged unionistic by some, but which in the conscientious judgment of others are not at all unionistic.



Christians must also be careful not to apply the word "avoid" of Romans 16 arbitrarily, mechanically, and legalistically, out of its connection, and still think that they are obeying the Word of God. Some good Christians in Jerusalem felt that Peter had committed a great wrong in not avoiding Cornelius, Acts 11:3.

Apply the question, "Has the Lord spoken?" to the issues listed in point 1 of the resolution of the Wisconsin Synod at its convention in Milwaukee. Has the Lord indicated clearly that the Common Confession is not "a settlement of past differences which are in fact not settled"? Do not purely historical questions enter? Does not human opinion or human judgment enter? Is not "adequacy" or "inadequacy" a very relative term for which no clear statement of Scripture can be quoted? Must we exclude the possibility that the brethren of the Wisconsin Synod may have misevaluated the Common Confession? Has the Lord stated clearly that Wisconsin must reject the request of Missouri to study also Part II of the Common Confession before passing definite judgment? Has the Lord spoken clearly and indicated that action must be taken now because four years will elapse before action can be completed on the basis of the Houston resolutions? That action must be taken now even though the charge has not and cannot be truthfully made that the Common Confession contains false doctrine? If no proof can be brought that the Common Confession contains false doctrine, where does the Lord say clearly that we must break the fellowship because we do not like certain formulations or have some misgivings?

In point 1 b the Milwaukee Resolutions charge Missouri with unionistic practices. Again we ask, Has the Lord spoken clearly? The term "unionism" is not used or defined in Scripture, but we are dealing with an ecclesiastical term. The Brief Statement defines it as "church-fellowship with the adherents of false doctrine," Par. 28. Such fellowship is clearly forbidden in Scripture. Again, here the question enters: When does a person become a confirmed errorist to whom Romans 16:17 must be applied? or when does he cease to be a confirmed errorist, to whom Romans 16:17 can no longer be applied? Is there any Scriptural warrant for listing a number of alleged practices which have occurred here and there in Missouri without showing that they actually are within the area of church fellowship and labeling them almost arbitrarily as unionistic and, therefore, as forbidden by Scripture? To note a few instances, where does Scripture say that the Common Confession is church fellowship with adherents to false doctrine? that "negotiating for purposes of union with a church body whose official position it is that it is neither possible nor necessary to agree in all matters of doctrine and which contends for an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God" is church fellowship forbidden by Scripture, especially when this position was restricted to mere points of doctrines and when even this restricted position as evidenced by the Common Confession, Part I and II, has actually been cancelled by the ALC Commissioners? that negotiating with lodges and Boy Scout headquarters is church fellowship? Where does Scripture

give Wisconsin the authority to devise an entirely new and far more comprehensive definition of unionism?

Has the Lord spoken in setting a time limit for the discussion of theological questions connected with some of the issues mentioned, e.g., scouting, chaplaincy, prayer-fellowship? For years Wisconsin and Missouri have discussed certain doctrinal questions in the article of the Church and the Ministry. Never has Wisconsin claimed that for this reason they could no longer have fellowship with Missouri. Never has Missouri even suggested that it must break fellowship with Wisconsin now, but is ready and urging that this point be further discussed in all calmness and earnestness. In the present issue, Missouri has declared its willingness to discuss the theological questions involved and proposed means for doing this. Where has the Lord indicated that this is not to be done, but that church fellowship of such long standing must be broken now?

We plead with Wisconsin to stop a while in its rush toward separation lest it become guilty of schism, separatism, that is, a separation in the church which God has not commanded and lest the charge raised against Missouri of having caused the break that now threatens the fellowship of the Synodical Conference boomerang and fling back deeply into the conscience of Wisconsin.

Zeal for the purity of the Gospel is very commendable, but it must always remain within the bounds so beautifully expressed by the Smalcald Articles: "The Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel," Trigl. p. 467.